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AUDREY.

A Novel

BY MISS LAURA JEWRY,

AUTHOR OF

“THE TIDE OF LIFE,” “THE CUP AND THE LIP,” “THE
FOREST AND THE FORTRESS,” ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,

30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1853.



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A U D R E Y.

CHAPTER I.

THIS sad event, and Lucy's last touching words, which were rumoured abroad, excited great interest in the neighbourhood. Everybody called on Tom; everybody talked of it; till some new event called off their attention, and left poor Taylor to a comparative solitude; this he found so unbearable, that he resolved to leave the once longed-for house, which, desecrated by so foul a deed, had become hateful to him, and seek for lodgings in York,

where his presence would be required at the approaching assizes.

He had made every arrangement for his departure, and was sitting at his solitary supper, for the last time, in the almost denuded apartment, when he was startled by a sudden and hurried knock at the door. Thinking that it was some friendly neighbours come to cheer the gloom of his lonely evening, he gladly obeyed the summons.

But the words of ready welcome died on his lips, and he started back with a feeling akin to superstitious horror and dismay, as he beheld not the expected guest, but Jean with his organ, monkey and white mice, standing in the porch. The full moon was pouring a flood of light on the spot where he stood, and the Swiss, in its cold radiance, looked pale and ghastly as a corpse. He perceived by Tom's action the emotion his presence inspired, and clasping his hands, cried, in a plaintive tone :—

“Oh, do let me come in, though she is gone. I only want to ask you about her. I will tie Jacko up here.”

“Come in,” said Tom, solemnly, “God forbid that I should refuse you shelter. I am glad that you are come.”

The organ-grinder tied his animal to the strong post of the porch, and entered; laid aside his organ, and its little white menagerie; cast a wistful look round the room, and then, after an instant's pause, burst into a passionate fit of tears. Tom, deeply moved, took his hand, and led him to a seat, near the fire.

“You've heard the sad news then, Jean?” he said, at a loss to know what he *should* say. Of course he felt sure of the fact, which he appeared to question.

“*Ah, oui, oui,*” cried the young man, rocking himself in his chair in an agony of grief. “*Oh, ma Lucie, ma femme, ma bien-aimée?*”

Tom suffered him to weep till his distress

became quite pitiable to behold ; then he tried to calm him.

“ Come, be a man !” he said, “ it is a great trouble for you, but you must try and bear it. Tears won’t call her back.”

“ *Hélas, non !*” sobbed the poor organ-grinder, “ *mais c’est moi qui l’ai tuée ! c’est moi, c’est moi.*”

“ Speak English, Jean, if you can, I don’t quite understand you—you can’t mean that *you* killed her ?”

“ Yes, I did, I did ! I make her pretend to be your daughter, I shut her up in walls. If she had lived with me, she would never have been killed by *des voleurs*. *Oh, Lucie, oh mon amie, mon cœur.*”

And he renewed his plaintive cry.

“ Come now, this is unmanly Jean,” said the sailor, “ and, as I said, can’t do any good. I loved the poor wench myself, as well as if she had been really my child, but I didn’t give way thus, even by her dying bed.”

“Did she think of me—*ma Lucie*—did she name her Jean?”

“Yes, her last thought was for you; her last words were, ‘Jean, my poor Jean, find him—teach—.’ You know what she must have meant.”

The Swiss answered only by sobs.

“I loved her, *de cœur*,” he said, at last, “I did not mean to stay away from her long. I was coming to her when the people tell me of her death. I thought I would die too, when I heard it, *mais non*—I walked on to ask you how she—if she—. *Oh, Lucie, Lucie—*”

And again he yielded to his sorrow. Tom was greatly pained. He considered the expression of Jean’s grief womanish and weak, but he had never thought the youth possessed so tender and affectionate a heart; the organ-grinder, in fact, had always appeared to a disadvantage, by the side of the animated energetic Lucy, shrewd and lively as he was, and Tom accused himself of having misjudged him.

This conviction, and the intense pity his tears inspired, made his host anxious in every way to soothe and comfort him. He found after a time that Jean had actually tasted no food since he heard of Lucy's death, and he then, with a fatherly kindness and authority insisted on the young man's eating some meat and drinking a glass of grog.

After this refreshment the Swiss appeared strengthened and better able to struggle with his grief, and asked for and listened, (with only the interruption of an occasional sob) to a detail of the fatal crime which had robbed him of the only heart that loved him.

"I was very silly," he said, "to let that dreadful old woman know so much, but I could not think she would be so *méchante*—*Lucie* begged me not to talk to her. Oh, that I had never left *ma douce amie*. She was sorry when I went, and cried, and asked me to come back soon. *Hélas ! Hélas !*"

A fresh burst of sobs.

“Well,” said Tom, solemnly, “she has left behind her an entreaty that you might be brought from your wild course, and vagabond habits. Being dead she speaks to you. Oh, heed her this time, Jean. I ain’t a parson, and can’t talk as I ought of Holy things, but see the good man that prayed by her death-bed, and let him teach you what is right.”

“Monsieur,” said Jean, naively, “I am but a poor fellow who has been too long used to roving ways to live quietly in one place ; but I will see this *bon pasteur* since Lucy wished it, and I will try to be honest and *aimer Dieu*. Wherever I go, I shall bear with me the memory of her who loved poor Jean, and like the presence of an angel it will keep me good.”

“Then Lucy will have done more than save my worthless life by the sacrifice of her own,” said Tom. “God does indeed bring good out of evil.”

“And her grave?” asked Jean, “where is my Lucie buried?”

“In the village church-yard, Jean.”

“I will go and look upon—. His lips trembled. “I cannot sleep till I have seen the place of her last repose.”

“Well, come then, so you shall. It may be a little comfort to you, and it is not far.”

The two men issued from the cottage on this errand. Tom closed the door.

“There is nothing now to tempt thieves,” he said, with a sigh, “and if there were, my old enemy, Jacko here, would dispute the entrance with them.”

The village church-yard was at no considerable distance, and the clear, frosty moonlight rendered the walk thither by no means an unpleasant one, had the thoughts of the pair, who strode on in sad silence, side by side, been of a more tranquil description.

At length they reached the old lych porch,

and gazed up the avenue of ancient yew trees through which the silvery rays of moon-light wavered, as their branches were gently moved by the breeze which sighed mournfully round the grey tower and over the moss-grown memorials of the dead.

Jean shivered.

“ *Qu'il fait froid !*” he murmured, “ *et tu restes ici, ma Lucie !*”

Tom opened the gate and led the way to a spot where the clear, calm, solemn light fell, unbroken by a shadow, on the new white head-stone, and the freshly covered grave.

“ She sleeps here. God bless her,” he said, in a reverent whisper, and with a suppressed cry, the Swiss threw himself beside the newly raised mound.

Respecting the bereaved husband's grief, Tom turned and left him, wandering away round the old tower to a distant part of the burial-ground, and indulging in a much more

serious *reverie* than was at all habitual to him. For quite an hour he suffered Jean to indulge his grief undisturbed ; then he returned to persuade him to return home. He found the poor fellow lying on the sod with one arm clasped around the cold stone, and as the moonlight fell upon his face, he perceived that Jean had wept himself to sleep.

“ Poor soul ! ” he thought, “ I dare say this is the first slumber, as it was the first food he had taken since he heard the sorrowful news. But he must not sleep here in the frost ; I, who have been walking briskly, am shivering with cold. Hillo, Jean, wake up, my good fellow.”

The Swiss rose with a sigh.

“ My poor Lucy,” he said. “ *Bon soir.* ”

There was a deep pathos in these words, simple as they were, and Tom took the vagrant’s hand, and pressed it in his own. From that hour, he was Jean’s stedfast and earnest friend.

The next morning, the organ-grinder, in

compliance with his dead wife's wish visited the clergyman, and had a long talk with him.

The good pastor appeared to feel bound, even as Jean was, by Lucy's dying adjuration, and urged the wanderer to remain awhile in the neighbourhood. The poor fellow gladly consented, and Tom furnished him with the means of support, telling him to follow him (Tom) to York, as soon as the clergyman would permit.

Jean was very grateful, and took up his abode at the blacksmith's lodgings. Day by day he received religious instruction from the good minister, and, as it appeared, not without profit.

On Sundays he was seen at church, devout and attentive; every evening found him beside Lucy's grave. Spring daisies opened their modest white flowers upon that simple mound ere he asked permission from his teacher to join Tom, whom he always styled his father, at York; and satisfied with the apparent

success of his efforts, the good man dismissed him with a blessing, and the gift of a Bible.

Tom, pleased at the subdued and improved expression of his *protégé*, gave him a warm welcome, and would fain have found some respectable employment for him ; but to this proposal, Jean was deaf.

“Wandering,” he said, “has become part of my nature, You might as well think the free mountain torrent would like to be crushed within narrow bounds, as that I could submit to live ever on one spot. Even *her* love could not so bind me.”

“But,” replied Tom, with regret, “if you return to your old vagrant habits, you will soon forget the good you have learned.”

“*Non, mon père* ; I shall never forget the words I listened to for Lucy’s sake, for I can never forget her. And every Sunday I will enter the nearest church, and hear them spoken to me again. No ; I know something now of

my duty. I will try to teach it to those who, like me and my poor Lucy, know not what is right."

Tom doubted the volatile wanderer's power of keeping good resolutions, exposed to the strong temptations of such a life; but he saw that arguments were of no avail, therefore he contented himself with simply requesting Jean to come and see him occasionally, which the young man promised; and thus, on one sunny February morning, they parted; and Jean proceeded with the wealth of his monkey and organ, once more, to grind a living from the small contributions of the people.

Would he retain the good he had heard, and, like the wandering stream, to which he had compared himself, carry fertility to waste places, or would Lucy, her love, her fate, and her dying wishes, be forgotten in the rude contact of the world?

No marvel Tom doubted and feared.

And now that we have thus brought our

friends in England through the cold and, to them, eventful winter, we will cast a glance back at those who braved its far greater cold and terrors in another land—the gallant Vaux and his squire Jack.

CHAPTER II.

It was sunset ; the west flamed with crimson waves of light, which were reflected in softened splendour from the eastern sky, whilst over the northern horizon, where the arrowy hues were lost in the distance, hung a heaven of stern, cold grey, telling of the grim majesty of the early winter, and of the might of the Alpine cold.

The peaks of that portion of the Tyrolese Alps on which it shone, glittered with rose

hues, looking, on some of the loftier summits, as if fire were bursting from beneath their mantle of snow ; a narrow valley now obscured by the lengthened mountains' shadows, lay beneath them ; a sort of natural *cul-de-sac*, the only access to which was closed by an immense avalanche, that had been checked in its course before it reached the village ; but which, as effectually entombed it, as if its snowy pall had fallen over it.

On a peak of the mountain, which overhung the valley, and which appeared, at first accessible only to the eagle or the cormorant, stood a party of men, discoursing eagerly together, and often casting anxious looks down on the village beneath them. That they should have gained that height—apparently perpendicular, and sharp as a needle—was of itself surprising ; but the marvel was increased by the fact that they had also conveyed thither, several casks of provisions, and huge coils of rope.

The adventurers were gathered together, discussing their future proceedings with great animation ; one, however, stood apart, and with folded arms, and an expression of awe and admiration on his countenance, gazed sometimes down the precipice, sometimes on the rosy summits of the Alps. He was disturbed in his meditation by the approach of one of the party, who, touching his hat, enquired, respectfully—"What were his honor's commands now ?"

Starting from his reverie, Vaux replied,

"I have scarcely decided yet, Jack. It seems to me that we have arrived too late to be of any use. I see no gleam of fires in the village, nor is any sound audible from it. It will be vain to attempt this perilous descent, and still more perilous return, if all its inhabitants have perished."

"Well, poor souls, it do seem as if they had," replied Jack, listening, "and, to be sure, we have been a long while getting here."

It *was* a terrible land voyage, and no mistake. My heart failed me once or twice, and if it had not been for your honor's steadiness, I don't think we should, any of us, have come on, though the Tyrolese are plucky fellows, and when they are shown how to handle a rope, very handy too. They'll take a hint or two, I expect, from us in future."

"Hush!" said Vaux. "What sound is that?"

They listened, and distinguished the sound of the church bell, low—broken—irregular—it spoke painfully of the feeble hand that tolled it.

"They live still!" exclaimed Vaux. "Thank God!"

And he bowed his head reverently.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack; the Tyrolese repeated the shout, and the rocks re-echoed their voices in many varied mocking tones, till the sound died faintly away in the distance.

“Don’t be making fun of us, you sirs !” cried the seaman, whimsically shaking his fist at the solemn mountains. “You may shout as you will, *we* know how to get up and down you.”

Vaux smiled, and began to give orders for the perilous descent.

“Look, Jack,” he said, “a rope must be dropped to yonder ledge ; it is as wide as a yard-arm, (standing room enough for us) then a cask, with a coil of rope, must be let down after, and they, who have already descended thither, must receive it, and manage their and its progress, as they shall see best. I will go first, and you shall follow me ; the ropes must be left everywhere, if possible, to facilitate our return.”

These simple preparations were speedily made ; and “the rope flew swiftly through Vaux’s glowing hands,” as soon as the iron hook, which was attached to it, had been securely fixed in the rock, and it hung free

and clear in the air. By his own skill and dexterity, he guided it towards the destined point, and was cheered lustily by his comrades when he stood safely on the dangerous ledge, so far beneath them. It was indeed a dizzy height; but he and Jack, who immediately followed him, stood on it as collected and unmoved as if no mighty chasm yawned beneath them.

The Tyrolese above actually shuddered as they beheld the seamen, who were each armed with an iron crook, catch the swaying cask, and draw it to the same narrow landing. They then uncoiled the rope attached to it, and let it down still lower, till it found another resting place. Vaux and Jack then followed it. The perpendicular character of the rock here changed, but its broken surface, full of deep fissures, and yawning gulfs, presented to them still greater difficulties; but they had courage, skill, and energy for all, and their example excited two of their mountain guides

to follow them with another cask of provisions, and a large coil of rope. We cannot graphically trace the progress of that fearful descent ; at last, but not till the moon had risen, did the four brave fellows stand, panting, blood-stained and exhausted, on the firm soil of the valley. Their clothes were torn, their hands and knees wounded ; but their object was achieved, they stood with two large casks of meat and bread amidst the entombed village, and the rope which, like the clue of a labyrinth, they had caught on every rocky point, would afford a means of egress to the greater number of the inhabitants.

“ Come,” said Vaux, after they had taken a brief rest, “ let us see how many living beings are still to be found here.”

And they walked into the little village, trundling their casks beside them. Near the entrance they were met by a priest, a thin,

pale, sad-looking man, who, when first he saw them, was so astonished, that he stood still, and did not even ask them who they were, nor whence they came. Vaux addressed him first.

“ A good even to you, Father,” he said, in his language, “ we are come to render you assistance.”

“ Come, and from whence ?” exclaimed the worthy man, in accents of amazement, “ by what miracle have you passed through the snow and the solid rock ?”

“ By God’s good providence,” replied Vaux, reverently ; “ we have climbed over the mountains, and descended from yonder height ; on which, if you look steadily, you will see a fire kindled by our comrades.”

“ Holy Virgin ! heard any one ever of *that* pass being attempted. Brave men, you come, indeed, like good angels, to save us at our utmost need. Famine has been busy with us,

and those who survive, live constantly and hourly in the presence of death. Follow me, and I will show you the few victims left."

The adventurers followed his slow and feeble steps, and in a few minutes were surrounded by nearly the whole population — a gaunt, half famished crowd that pressed eagerly round, and welcomed with hungry eyes the food the strangers brought them—overwhelming their deliverers with thanks and blessings. Vaux felt fully repaid for his gallantry and endurance, when he gazed upon the scene. Here a mother pressed her starving child to her bosom, and sobbed her thanks; there an aged man who had lived feebly on, when manhood in its glory had sunk beneath the pressure of want, extended his long thin fingers to clutch the morsel presented to him, rejoicing in the hope of a little longer life, or at least, of deliverance from such a death.

Whilst assisting the priest in distributing food, Vaux felt his arm touched by a tall, and

in spite of his starved appearance, very handsome young man ; he turned and asked, " what he wished."

" Kind stranger," was the reply ; " my wife is too near death to swallow food. I have tried in vain to feed her with the portion the father gave me ; and I bethought me that one who could climb our mountains thus, must be wiser as well as better than others. Will it please you to come and see her."

Vaux instantly complied.

The young man led him with steps more rapidly than his strength appeared to promise towards a *chalet* at no great distance. Here on a rude couch drawn as near to the scanty fire as possible, lay a pretty young woman, fast sinking from exhaustion. Her eyes lighted up as she perceived her husband. He took her hand and told her, who his companion was. She smiled faintly, and tried to speak, but vainly. Vaux had a flask of brandy in his pocket ; he administered a few drops of the

restorative, and their effect speedily became visible. Life rallied ; in a short time she could swallow a mouthful of biscuit steeped in the same liquor, and Vaux, pleased at the success of his efforts, left a portion of the contents of the flask with her husband, and returned to assist the father in his benevolent labours. In about a couple or three hours, all the survivors of the village had received a share of the provisions, and then the priest urged Vaux and his companions to accompany him home for the night. The weary men gladly accepted the proffered hospitality, and seated round a blazing fire in the pastor's humble dwelling, partook of a supper, which their recent heavy toil rendered most welcome. Here Vaux questioned the priest as to the details of the catastrophe from which the village had suffered.

“ Had you,” he asked, “ no warning of its approach ?”

“ Yes,” he replied ; “ I will tell you all we know of the matter. Last summer was very

rainy ; on the second and third of September, it rained incessantly. New crevices were observed in that side of the mountain, a sort of crackling noise was heard inside it. Old people said an avalanche was threatened.

“ And why in the name of common sense did you not all fly ? ” exclaimed the Englishman.

“ Nay, we could not be sure ; the avalanche might fall another way—it was not *close* to the village ; and, monsieur, it is no light thing to leave the home of one’s youth, and to desert all one’s property. Moreover, the peril of travelling with feeble women and children through the threatening pass, appeared greater than remaining here. The very day it fell, a youth, whom I had taught in his boyhood, and whom I loved as a son, came to bid me farewell before he left our native mountains for ever. He told me that he had heard strange noises within the mountain as he traversed the pass, and that a peasant had shown him how a

spade thrust into the earth moved of its own accord ; the neighbouring springs had also become dry. He would not have continued his journey hither after witnessing these threatening prognostications, had he not loved me as a son ; but he came to take me with him to a country where nature is more benignant to her children."

" And wherefore did you not take his advice and escape while there was yet time ? *You* had no ties of family or property to bind you to this miserable valley."

" Nay, my son," replied the pastor, in a slight accent of reproof, " a priest's family is his flock ; his property their immortal souls. I might not leave my appointed post ; and it was well I tarried, for these poor simple ones had all perished, I do believe, if God had not given me judgment to manage for them.

" I refused to go, and Basil, kind heart, was satisfied with my reasons for so doing ; but he told me, *he* might not tarry, for he had a young

wife and an hitherto unseen child watching for his coming in distant England, and it was decided that he should go after dawn of morning. Alas ! that very night the slumbers of all were broken by a mighty rushing noise. The snow, bearing with it a huge fragment of rock, came rolling down, waking in its thundering course a thousand echoes, till it found a bed in the pass below. Oh, *mes amis* ! we listened to that sound as to the trumpet of doom. All gathered outside their dwellings, and the flickering torch-light shone on faces pale with fear and horror. We knew not at first if the avalanche would not at once crush us in its icy embrace, as befel the Ville de Pleurs ; but it was not so, we were destined to a more lingering fate. We were shut in we found—in that which must be our tomb. But at that instant, which appeared to be the last of time for us, I bade Basil ring the church bell, that we might be found when our Lord came duly awaiting him. My people gathered

within the holy place, and there amidst sobs and tears, and deep amens, I prayed for them.

“The morning light disclosed our true position, and then it became necessary to think how we could best act. I sought for Basil to consult with him, for he was ever ready-witted from a boy; and I found him standing quite near the avalanche, gazing on it in mute despair. I tried to rouse him from this trance of grief, but it was long before I could succeed. He heeded not a word I said, but murmured continually, ‘My wife—my child.’ And, indeed, it was a sore and a bitter trial, worse perhaps for him than for any other inmate of the valley. At least in death *they* were not divided.”

“Poor fellow!” exclaimed Vaux, “and where is he now? Not dead I hope.”

“No Monsieur; he still lives, thank God! It was he whom you saw assisting me in the

distribution of your bounty ; he, it was, who rang our vesper bell to-night."

"To which sound you owe your—I trust—deliverance. But for the bell we should not have attempted the descent, believing from the silence and darkness of the village that we came too late."

The priest bent his head reverently.

"The good God be praised for it !" he said, "we have never in our direst need neglected evening prayer nor any other rite of religion ; great part of my flock—the weak, sickly and old—have perished from insufficient nourishment, and want of fire, though as far as we possibly could, Basil and I strove to have the provision and fuel to be found in the valley equally divided amongst all ; but want makes people selfish, and we could not obtain an equal distribution. Nevertheless, we have done what we could. But, Messieurs, you must be *épuisés de fatigue* ; will you not seek repose ?"

The adventurers gladly acceded to this proposition, and were soon stretched round the stove ; Vaux occupying, at his reverend host's entreaty, the pastor's own couch. Jack and the Tyrolese were soon fast asleep, and snoring loudly, but the young officer who had suffered more, was prevented by the pain of his excoriated knees, elbows, and hands, from so soon finding repose ; and before he closed his eyes in slumber, he beheld the door of the *chalet* open, and a peasant of very superior mien and remarkable personal beauty enter. The old pastor welcomed him in a glad whisper, and the youth embraced him with an air of joy, whispering eagerly, and brushing away tears of delight, for so Vaux judged them from the expression of his countenance.

A feeling of exquisite happiness, the pleasure of doing a kind action, thrilled through the sailor's heart, as he gazed ; this unfortunate restored to hope, and the dying girl to life, were alone sufficient balsam for his

physical injuries. He forgot his pain and sank unconsciously into a sweet slumber, in the dreams of which Helen Beaumont looked upon him with soft approving eyes.

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning found the village astir in all the excitement of hope and renovated strength. They gazed with wonder at the preparations made for conveying food to them, and for facilitating their escape, and eagerly assisted the seaman in constructing rope ladders, which *he* called *shrouds*, by means of which nearly all could climb the ascent. The people to be delivered were mountaineers, accustomed to cold and to climbing steep rocks, and therefore their profiting by the means

offered them, was not so doubtful as it otherwise must have been.

The Tyrolese, on the summit of the peak or needle, (who had taken refuge from the night wind, in a cave,) were also now lending every assistance from above, and in two days the whole number of surviving inhabitants had quitted their living tomb, and commenced their perilous pilgrimage to seek other homes.

It would be wearying to tell of all the "moving incidents by flood and fell," which occurred during the course of their extraordinary migration. Many perished in it, and

"Left their bones upon the icy mountain cold,"

but finally Vaux, Jack, the good priest, Basil, and some twenty survivors, gained the nearest village, and were welcomed to the homes of their mountain brethren. During the course of this pilgrimage, Vaux, who had been, at first sight, greatly interested in Basil, made the young man's acquaintance, and learned in the

course of one of their conversations, that he had been the *protégè* of Sir Philip Beaumont. This discovery naturally led to a relation of Vaux's intimacy with the family, and of the manner in which the latter's act of heroic benevolence originated. Basil was touched, when he found, that in a certain degree, he owed his restoration to life and society to Helen Beaumont.

"I saved her life, then," he exclaimed, "that she might be indirectly the means of my preservation from a far worse fate. How wonderfully the events of one person's life react on those of another!"

Vaux was rejoiced at finding he had thus, in a manner, paid Helen's debt, and his fancy for the young Tyrolese grew stronger, when he found he owed her whom he fondly called *his* Helen, to him. He kept Basil constantly beside him, to talk of the Beaumonts, (*i. e.* of *Miss* Beaumont,) and every grateful word of praise, and every little incident touching the goodness or talent

of his young patroness, rendered the weary waste of snow more tolerable, and took from the journey the greater portion of its horror. Vaux urged Basil to accompany him to the Beaumonts, and the young man gladly consented. He wished to make Sir Philip and his daughter perfectly acquainted with the noble qualities of their gallant friend; moreover, Geneva was not out of his route homewards.

Jack, as well as his master, had taken a great liking to Basil; the latter could speak English, which the seaman found a great recommendation, and he managed very often to walk by Basil's side, and have a chat with him.

"So you are a cousin of the chap that first told us of the Havalanche," said Jack, one day, "your name is Vindelkind?"

Basil assented.

"It's very like another name I have some cause to remember," continued the sailor,

“You haven’t got some kinsfolk of the name of Fiddlekin, have you? A fellow who carries an organ, and has a monkey and white mice for show.”

“No, I know of none such.”

“It was he as was the first cause that brought me to foreign parts,” said Jack, thoughtfully, “and put it into my head to climb up Mong Blong. He married the daughter of a messmate of mine, a jolly good fellow, who was quite taken aback when he heard of it. Poor Tom! I just shall make him stare when I tell him of my adventures! A precious yarn they’ll make for the middle watch. I shall take a run down to Yorkshire to see him, on purpose to spin it to him.”

“My home is in Yorkshire,” said Basil. “I have a sweet wife and a little child there.”

“An Englishwoman, eh?”

“Yes; an English girl. Her name was

once Dabney. Do you know people so called?"

"What!" shouted Jack, at the highest pitch of his voice, "Dabney! It can't be sure-ly. Where did she come from?"

"From a village called Charliewood, near the town of ——"

Jack gave a shrill whistle, sprang up, caught Basil by the hand, which he shook unmercifully, and then throwing up his hat, gave three cheers.

Basil, much surprised, enquired why he was so delighted?

"Why? 'cause you've married my old chum's daughter—and you are a good fellow, that he may be proud to own as a son. But, come, let's make all sure by overhauling the log. When did you marry her? Was her uncle a sextant? and was her aunt as ugly an old craft as one could find afloat?"

Basil, of course, answered all these questions satisfactorily; and Jack again expressed his satisfaction.

“But,” he continued, after a time, “I’m blessed but he’s been gloriously taken in!”

And he related to Basil the claim of the Paris impostors, and their allowal by Tom Taylor, alias Dabney.

Basil had heard from his wife the story of her father’s disappearance; and her belief that he might be still living, and his own knowledge eking out Jack’s relation, he came to the satisfactory conclusion that this was indeed his Audrey’s father.

Jack and he were both of opinion that they ought to proceed immediately to England to undeceive poor Tom, and Vaux, to whom the strange circumstance was confided, proposed that they should go thither with him.

“My property,” he said, “is in the North; I shall, therefore, of course, proceed directly thither; and I hope to induce Sir Philip and

Miss Beaumont to become my guests there for a season."

With this understanding existing between them, the little party at length reached Lausanne.

CHAPTER IV.

It was with a strange mixture of feelings that Helen Beaumont welcomed her lover on his return from this perilous enterprise. Joy at his safety, and admiration of his gallantry and humanity, were blended with doubt and fear, and the shame of having to avow her folly. Indeed, so strong had this latter sensation become, that, but for her father, she would have refused him at once, and concealed her love, rather than have made the humiliating con-

fession. Her emotion (arising from this cause only) when she heard that Basil himself was one of the resuscitated village party, and that he was actually in the house, was so great, that Vaux was struck and startled at it. One instant her face was suffused with crimson blushes, the next it grew pale as death.

We have said, that pride and jealousy were the two faults that at times marred the noble nature of the young officer; and certainly where such existed, Helen's agitation, and speechless emotion, could scarcely fail of making a deep impression.

"You are much moved, Miss Beaumont," he said, with a slight tone of sarcasm; "I am happy to find that I have been the means of serving one in whom you take so profound an interest."

Sir Philip's cheek flushed at the tone in which these words were uttered.

"My daughter owes her life to this excellent young man," he replied; "and for more

than two years he was a member of our family. It is natural and *proper* that his danger and marvellous preservation should agitate and disturb her."

Vaux bowed gravely and silently. The excuse did not satisfy his doubts.

Sir Philip rang the bell.

"Tell Monsieur Findelkind," he said to the servant who answered the summons, "that we shall be glad to see him."

"And Jack !" exclaimed Helen, "my trusty and devoted 'squire must not be forgotten."

The invitation was promptly obeyed, and both were welcomed warmly by Sir Philip and his daughter. She shook hands with Basil, and with Jack also; lauded the latter for his heroism, and congratulated the Tyrolese on his escape.

Her manner had resumed all its usual self-possession, and Vaux's doubts would have

been wholly removed, had not Basil's countenance, at thus again meeting her, whom he had last seen on a bed of suffering, evinced as much varying emotion as hers did when she first heard of his escape. Vaux regretted that he had already "committed himself," as he styled it; to be accepted or rejected would be alike mortifying with his present sensations. He could not conceal his discomposure; he grew silent and embarrassed, and, at last, pleading fatigue and exhaustion, retired to his own room.

There, in the quiet of solitary reflection, he began to take a new view of the matter, and reproached himself for his degrading suspicions.

"To think that she could love a menial," he thought, for thus his pride estimated the musician, "it is an insult to her character as a lady. It is more probable that the poor fool dared to raise his eyes to her, and that she,

with a woman's quick perception detected, and now blushes at the attachment of her low-born lover. That would explain the whole."

And comforting himself with these reflections Vaux fell asleep.

The next morning he requested a few minutes of private conference with Miss Beaumont. She turned very pale and trembled a little, as she said—

"Mr. Vaux, I suppose I can guess the subject you wish to discuss, and in consequence of a conversation I had last night with papa, I have resolved on leaving it to him to answer you."

"To your father, Helen! oh, let me hear either 'yes' or 'no' from your own lips! Speak it now, dearest; only that little word, Helen!"

"No, no," she said, hurriedly, "I cannot—he will explain—"

And breaking from him, she flew to her own chamber.

The next moment Sir Philip joined Vaux.

In torturing anxiety, Helen awaited the conclusion of that interview. She had guessed enough from Vaux's countenance the previous evening, and from the latent jealousy she detected in his words, to dread its result, and she had even besought her father not to try his love, but at once to give him a quiet and kind rejection; but Sir Philip would not consent to what he esteemed a foolish trifling away of happiness, and persisted in letting Vaux judge for himself; fully confident that he would not love Helen the less for her girlish and conquered fancy.

How long they were together! She looked at her watch—a whole hour was gone! She tried to read, but could not see the words upon the page. At last there came a footstep on the stairs; it was her father's; he paused for an instant ere he opened her door, and then stood before her with a face so full of tender pity and

grave indignation, that she knew at once her fate.

The pang was keen at first, but she threw herself into her father's arms, and as he clasped her to his heart, she murmured :—

“ Nothing will ever divide us now on earth.”

“ No, Helen, I believe not,” he said, “ but I am very angry—very much disappointed in Vaux. You have escaped being a jealous fool's slave ; I had altogether mistaken and over-rated him. He was not worthy of you. Who, in truth *is* worthy of my Helen.”

“ Alas ! it is she who is unworthy. Do not misjudge Vaux for my sake ; I esteem him more for rejecting such a one as I. Is he—is he gone ?”

Her voice faltered a little.

“ Yes, love—we parted friends at last—at least not on unpleasant terms—and your secret is safe in his keeping. There is no distrusting

the jealous honour of one who places a fastidious and morbid delicacy above his love."

Her tears fell on her father's hands.

"Indeed, Helen, I believe it is better that things have so chanced. You would have been very unhappy with such a husband; a jealous temper is of all others, the most tormenting to a wife, and never can be cured. Come, my pet; do not weep; you have your old doting father to watch over and love you still."

And he bent his noble head lovingly over her, and looked down on her with bright earnest eyes full of unchangeable and trusting affection. She wept still, but more gently.

"Dearest, I would you had a mother, I am ill skilled to sustain you under such a trial. Alas! my poor Helen, I am an awkward comforter."

"No, no," she cried passionately, "you have been father, mother, brother, all to me. Your love can, and does comfort me at all

times. Oh, most dear father, I am only too happy with you, but the shame—the humiliation,”—fresh sobs interrupted her words.

Sir Philip did not speak for some minutes; *his* eyes also were dimmed with tears.

“Did he,” she sobbed, “did he despise me so very much? Does he hate me?”

“No, love; he admires, esteems, honours you; he told me so himself in an agony of grief, but he has long resolved never to accept of a second love, and—and—in short, he was bitterly mortified, and is a proud, wrong-headed fool. I am sorry Basil chanced to fall in his way.”

“Nay, it is a just punishment for my misconduct—a due reward for the pain I gave to you.”

“Well, Helen, do not weep so; it breaks my heart, pet.”

She struggled with her tears.

“Leave me a little while alone, papa,” she said, “I shall be better by-and-by. It is dif-

difficult to stop one's tears sometimes. Go down, and I will come to you presently."

Sir Philip did as she desired, but she did not rejoin him till dinner time—then she came into the drawing-room looking a little pale, but with no trace of tears on her countenance, and talked with him quietly on indifferent subjects. Only once a sudden pang was expressed by a slight twitching of her ruby lips as her eyes fell on Vaux' vacant place. Sir Philip endeavoured to divert her thoughts by telling her of Basil's marriage, and of the discovery he had made, through Jack, of Audrey's father, and of the fact that the lost Tom Dabney was one of Helen's deliverers from the clutches of monsieur de Brissac. She was much interested by the recital.

"Audrey, her friends, kindred, and allies, are for ever getting mixed up in events connected with myself," she said. "When we return to England, I shall seek her out, and endeavour in some way to be of service to her."

Helen Beaumont's second love-crossing did not produce a brain fever, nor, in fact, in any way affect her health. She had nothing to reproach herself with, which was one great alleviation of the disappointment; moreover, she had been taught, since the last, in the school of sickness and reflection. Her feelings no longer mastered her. She could, and did practise self-control; and the single and great error of her life, was nobly atoned for by the patient resignation and cheerful fortitude with which she submitted to its punishment. Very shortly after this incident, the baronet and his daughter left Switzerland for Paris.

CHAPTER V.

THE winter was a long one for Audrey ; dreary not only with gloom and rain, and tempest, but with that yearning for approaching happiness which lengthens time so fearfully. After forwarding the money to Basil, and thus doing all she could to expedite his return, she tried to occupy her mind with other cares, to quiet the anxiety and restlessness of hope deferred. But the task was a difficult one. She worked so well, and was in such constant practice, that

her thoughts and attention were not engrossed by her task, and as her busy needle moved, her equally busy imagination dwelt upon her husband's winter journey, and all the possible dangers which might attend it. She was not clever at geography ; admirably as her education fitted her for all the duties of her station. She had some general notions of it, from having seen a globe, and a few maps ; but we doubt if in reading Shakespeare, she had ever been startled at hearing of the shores of Bohemia ; consequently, as her fancy traced her Basil's progress through unknown realms created by her fancy, a thousand strange phantoms stood in his path and scared her. Now she dreaded robbers—now wolves ; now the descent of dreadful mountains ; now the traversing of hideous Black forests ; now that he might lose his way ! and be murdered at some Spanish inn, such as that mentioned in Hood's terrible story of the corpse in a wine cask. And the wind howling mournfully round the old house,

seemed to echo her dismal thoughts, whilst John immersed in his resumed (and now useful) pursuit of the muses, seldom spoke to her, and was too pre-occupied to notice how nervous she had grown.

This was, perhaps, the saddest period of poor Audrey's life. The weary stitch ! stitch ! stitch ! the want of society, the external gloom ; but for her infant she would have sunk under her continuous and dreary toil, but *it* was a sunshine in the dwelling, and many a time its low cooing, and its unconscious caresses comforted her far better than any other human consoler could.

Now, too, the effect of that education, which had neglected geography, but enforced mental discipline and self-denial, prevailed. She did not yield to low spirits, and grow hysterical ; but struggled against both her loving fears and the exhaustion of labour, and thus partially conquered both. She sang very often over her work—she tried to amuse her old schoolmistress,

by inventing pretty stories, which she could comprehend well enough to be entertained by them ; and when she had a minute's leisure, she danced about with her baby.

Thus time stole on its resistless course, and gold and silver crocuses and graceful snow-drops peeped forth, and the willow donned its first buds, but yet no Basil had arrived. She had heard from him. A long letter came, telling her that he was safe with his and her friends, the Beaumonts, and relating how he had been delivered from a snowy tomb by Mr. Vaux and Jack, and how he had learned excellent news, that would delight her, when he could impart them, from a brave seaman, who had also been one of his deliverers.

Basil's account of the avalanche and of his escape was very brief and bald, for he still wrote English with difficulty ; but Audrey's imagination pieced out and painted the whole scene, and she shuddered at the awful peril,

which had so nearly widowed her. She forgot, in the thought of it, the mysterious news promised on Basil's return; she could neither speak nor think of anything but the avalanche; even the approaching assizes and Mary's peril were, for the time, obliterated from her mind, and John wisely forbore to allude to them in any way.

It was a bright, clear, cold morning. Audrey, seated by the fire, rocked her infant's cradle with her foot, and sang a lullaby, as she worked. John was reading—dame Page cutting a piece of flannel in shreds, for no intelligible purpose, when the sound of carriage wheels was heard approaching the house. Audrey dropped her embroidery in her lap, and a bright colour rose to her cheek.

"Basil is come!" she exclaimed; and as the door-bell rang, she sprang from her seat, and rushed to answer the summons.

Alas! her heart sank with a sick feeling of disappointment, as she beheld the face of the

visitor whom farmer Atkins had once brought to the house, projected from the window of the fly. She could have cried from the bitterness of her disappointment; but it was, in a slight measure, alleviated, when, alighting from the carriage, "Mr. Taylor" handed Mary out, and the poor girl, springing up the steps, clasped her young mistress's hand in hers, and wept.

"Yes, ma'am," said Tom, in answer to her wondering look, "here she is safe, and free, and as innocent as a baby, in all men's eyes. And I—" he hesitated, choked by some strong momentary emotion, "I am come to thank you for all your kindness to my poor daughter."

"Your daughter!" exclaimed Audrey.

"Yes, ma'am. Thank God. She is my own child, sure enough."

Audrey was greatly surprised. She ushered her unexpected guests into the parlour, and there learned from her still unknown father's

lips, the little history of his recovered daughter.

“I was sent for, ma’am,” he said, “only a few days ago, by the governor of the jail, who told me that the fellow who shot poor Lucy—you’ve heard of the murder, I don’t doubt, ma’am?—had made a confession to him about several other thefts and house-breakings, amongst which, was the very one that yonder poor lass was accused of. He had owned that the girl, who was her fellow servant, was his sweetheart, and had given the plate slyly to his mother, the old gipsy woman, who accused Mary of it; and that, after she had fled away for fear of her master’s anger, the wretch had put several things of their mistress’s into Mary’s box, and thus confirmed the gipsy’s accusation, and accounted for many of her own former thefts. The governor thought I should like to know of the villain’s confession, and also that, if I was going over to farmer Atkins’s, I might tell him and you about it.

He had already informed the lawyer you were so good as to engage for Mary. Well, ma'am, having always felt an interest in the lass, since I heard you speak of her, I thought I should like to see her, and the governor gave me leave. As soon as ever I set my eyes on her, I was struck by her likeness to my poor child that I thought dead, whom I hadn't seen for six years, and she, dear, little soul, remembered me better than could be expected; and whilst I was talking to her, fell a-crying. Of course, I asked the reason, and she told me, I was like her poor father that was drowned at sea. Well, then, to be sure, I asked her his name, and found it was my very self! She hadn't been dead at all, ma'am! but the old catamaran of a nurse I left her with, had put her out to service when she was but eleven years old, and kept the allotment, I made her, for herself, telling my poor child that I was drowned at sea, and that she was a poor orphan

without friends, and must work for her bread."

Tom paused, much excited, and kissed his daughter.

"The old woman left her in Yorkshire," he continued, "and she never saw nor heard any more of her; but I did; for when I came home, she told me the girl was dead and buried, and gave me a bill for the expenses of her funeral. I ought to have made more enquiry than I did; but I never suspected the old wretch, and had not much time ashore just then. I'll pay her out for it now, she may depend on't."

Audrey wished Mary joy of finding her father, and expressed her surprise at the daring imposition of the nurse.

"Why, ma'am," replied Tom, "the folks about seaports soon learn that a sailor is an easy chap to impose upon; he hasn't much suspicion in him, generally; but is as

innocent and simple as a child, and is so little ashore, that he doesn't get up to their ways, and hasn't time to find them out in their tricks. *I* ought to have been more wide awake, because I have had better teaching, and didn't go early to sea—at least, not till I was past twenty; but, you see, I was cheated very easily. And I can't but say," he added, after a few minutes' pause, "I can't but say that I deserved it. I let other folks believe *me* dead, and forsook a poor orphan child of my first wife's; and so *I* have been deceived by a pretended death, and deprived of the child I did love."

"And Mary is rejoiced to see her father," said Audrey, taking the girl's hand kindly. "She has a home of her own now. I have missed you greatly, my dear."

"I dare say you have," she replied, simply; "but now I shall come to you again, and father will help us all. He says he should like me to stay with you, that I may grow like

you. I wish you would let him lodge here, ma'am?"

Audrey smiled at the rude frankness of her former domestic.

"Mary speaks the truth, though she is but a poor hand at asking a favour," said Tom, "I should be proud and thankful, ma'am, if you *could* spare a room or two—"

He hesitated.

"I should be very glad to have such an inmate," replied Audrey, "if my husband would like it; but I cannot tell till his return, which will soon happen, I hope. I should not like to make arrangements of that nature without his consent."

Tom approved of her prudence; but hoped it might be, arranged for his daughter's sake; and then, in reply to Audrey's questions, gave a relation of the brief appearance of Mary before the assize court, and of her acquittal from the charge made against her.

Whilst he was talking, his daughter renewed her acquaintance with John and his grandam.

Dame Page, who had hitherto sat quite in the back ground, now pulled her chair forward, and welcomed Mary with a transport of maternal delight, which attracted Tom's attention, and interrupted his account of the trial—if such Mary's could be called. He gazed at the old woman with a wondering glance, which Audrey observed, and supposing that it proceeded from his surprise at hearing the dame address Mary as her daughter, explained, “that good Mrs. Page's mind was a little unsettled, and that she was under the delusion that Mary was her dead daughter restored to her.”

“Page !” repeated Tom, in still greater amazement, “why, 'tis the same name as well as the same face, only twenty years older. Does she come from a place called Charliewood ?”

“Yes; she was schoolmistress there some years ago.”

“My old friend—my poor old friend,” exclaimed Tom, “I knew her face directly. And you, also, come from Charliewood, ma’am?”

“Yes, it was my birth place.”

“And,”—in great agitation—“did I not once hear you called *Audrey*?”

“Very likely, my name is Audrey.”

“Oh! pray forgive my curiosity; but who were your parents?—how came you by that name?”

“My father’s name was Thomas Dabney. He died when I was an infant, and so did my poor mother. My uncle called me Audrey, because his poor brother loved the name.”

With one loud cry of joy and wonder, the sailor caught her to his heart.

“My child—my child!” he cried. “*I* am Tom Dabney—*I* am your father! Mary, it was your sister who saved you.”

Mary was already beside him.

“My sister!” she cried, “Audrey my sister?”

Audrey’s eyes wandered from one to the other with a bewildered glance.

“Father?—sister?” she ejaculated. “Good Heaven! can it be?”

And then, overpowered by wonder and pleasure, she burst into tears.

Tom placed her on a chair, and Mary flew for a glass of water.

It was some time before they could calm her agitation; some time before Tom himself could obtain self-possession enough to relate the story of his flight, and deplore his long neglect of his orphan child.

“But,” said Audrey, when he paused, “you are called Taylor—farmer Atkins called you so.”

“Ay, it was the name I was entered by on the ship’s books, and, of course, as I wished Jonathan to believe me dead, I kept it when I

came ashore. But it is right that you should have some proof of my identity. I know what it is to be imposed on myself. You shall not have a doubt. I wish my old friend here could recollect well enough to recognise me."

"Talk to her, and try," said Audrey, "not that I doubt your truth, my dear father; but I should like her to recognise you."

He approached the dame.

"A good day to you, Mrs. Page," he said, "I hope you are well and happy."

She looked at him earnestly.

"Very well, thank you," she said, "how is your wife, poor Mary, and the baby?"

He winced a little. Her mind had wandered back twenty years; but he saw she recognised him.

"Quite well," he said, sighing; "will you tell that lady my name, dame Page?—she calls me Taylor."

"No, Audrey," said the dame, shaking

her head, "it is Tom Dabney—a good-natured fellow, my dear—only a little wild, and not too wise. He ran away from his wife and child. I'm glad he's come back, though their house is burnt down, and everybody gone now. Where *is* poor Mary?"

Tom sighed as he turned away from her.

"There, Audrey," he said, "you have heard me recognised as I deserved to be—a worthless fellow, yet good-natured. Tell me, dear, can you forgive me for having forsaken you in your cradle? Will you own such a father?"

She kneeled down by him, and kissed his hand, bathing it with her tears. He raised her, and embraced her, blessing her in a broken voice, and then Mary, who had stood weeping by them, again embraced her sister, and John extended his thin hand to welcome his Audrey's kindred. Old dame Page gazed on the scene with bewildered eyes, muttering

an occasional, "Oh, dear. Where *is* poor Mary?"

A happy party assembled that evening round Audrey's tea-table; and John's fancy for listening to romantic adventure, was fully gratified by the relation which Tom Dabney gave them of his own wild and adventurous career.

The forsaken daughter had a little to forgive—especially when he spoke of his second marriage, and his voluntary abandonment of her infant self to the care of others; but her disposition was sweet and placable, and his following search for her, when he believed her sister dead, consoled her for the pain his thoughtless selfishness had given.

They all laughed at the result of Jack's embassy to Charliewood, and his description of Findelkind; and at the imposition to which it had led, though pity for Lucy's sad fate

checked their mirth with regard to the monkey and white mice. And then Audrey had to tell her own simple story, and Mary to relate her recent escape from the fate of a convicted felon, whilst all united in adoring the good Providence which had so ordered their destinies as to bring them thus together in the end.

It was decided that Tom Dabney should, henceforward, take up his abode at his daughter's house, at least, till her husband returned ; and Mary, who was quite at home again, busied herself in preparing her own room for him, till he could send furniture for a vacant one from York ; meantime, she was to share her sister's chamber.

As they were retiring for the night, the sisters had to pass the window from whence Audrey had perceived the prostrate form of Mary lying on the snow, and, involuntarily, both paused beside it. Mary

wound her arm round her sister's waist, and kissed her.

"It was from this spot you first beheld me," she said, "you little thought, dear, kind heart! that you were about to save your only sister. It must have been the guardian angel, of which you first told me, that led me to your very threshold."

"Ah, well, is it said," exclaimed Audrey, returning her embrace, "that we oftentimes entertain angels unawares. If I had neglected you—"

She shuddered, then added, solemnly,

"You brought my father in your footsteps, love. I owe his restoration to you. See, how the events of our lives form, as it were, one archway, of which the key-stone is some gentle deed. Dear Mary, our history is full of awful warning and holy teaching."

"I think I understand you, Audrey—a

little, at least—but soon you will teach me to know all your meaning—will you not?”

Audrey kissed her, and drew her, in silence, for she was very thoughtful at that miuute, into their common chamber.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the first night of a new opera, and the French Opera House was crowded to excess. The music was charming—the Prima Donna excelled herself in the conception and execution of her part—and the “spirits” of the audience were “attentive,” save in one box, which was occupied by a party of young men, who had been dining together, and whose spirits were too highly exhilarated by champagne and excitement, to be in the state, Portia

judged, meet for the hearing or appreciation of good music. They laughed, quizzed the singers, and bantered each other to the manifest annoyance of a grave, aristocratic Englishman, who occupied the corner of the next box, close to the most dissipated-looking of the party, and who appeared to be greatly annoyed by the tenor of their conversation.

A disdainful glance had been cast on them several times in vain, and the unlucky stranger, at length, resigned himself to his fate, unwilling to make a quarrel or disturbance by any verbal remonstrance, and endeavouring to shut his ears against their impertinences by intent attention to the music, resolving to complain to the box-keeper of the annoyance when he left the house. His thoughts, meantime, were somewhat as follows :

“ I wonder what folly brought me here ! I, who detest music ! I might have found another place to think in, than the Opera House ;

but, I have a sad pleasure in visiting *her* favorite places of resort."

Here his reverie was interrupted by the sound of a name, that struck on his ear like an electric shock. His neighbour had drawn out an exquisitely beautiful little watch, and one of his companions admiring it, and taking it from him to examine it, observed some initials on the back which were evidently *not* those of the wearer, and exclaimed:—

"Ha, de Brissac! a *gage d'amour*—is it? I judged it to be a lady's watch. Who was the fair donor, this same H. B," and he pointed to the initials.

"Oh, an English girl, Helen Beaumont," replied the *roué*, carelessly, "whom I met at the Tuilleries' balls. She gave it me as a parting *souvenir*."

"What! Mademoiselle Beaumont! who was undisputed queen of beauty last season? Happy man that thou art! oh, *mon ami*, she is as rich as beautiful. Why did you not push your for-

tunes with her, and rebuild the hotel de Brissac with English gold?"

"Nay, the fair Helen did not please my fancy," was the contemptuous reply, and de Brissac continued speaking of Helen in terms of the vilest slander, till he felt a hand laid suddenly on his shoulder, and turning, beheld the flashing eyes of his neighbour in the next box fixed on him.

"*Eh Bien*, what would you, monsieur?" he asked, quailing, nevertheless, beneath that indignant gaze.

"I would tell you," replied the stranger, in a low, quiet tone, and with a slight English accent, "that you are a liar and a villain, and desire you to retract every word you have said."

De Brissac answered in a rage; and his companions also interfering, the whole party left the house to arrange matters without. The Englishman was attended by a friend whom he chanced to meet in the lobby. As soon as

they had gained a convenient locality for discussion, he announced himself as a Mr. Vaux, a friend and relative of Sir Philip Beaumont's, and in his name, demanded from de Brissac, an avowal that he had slandered Miss Beaumont. The Frenchman, though under some alarm (for he was in Paris as privately as could be, and only for a day, but had been persuaded by his companions to accompany them to the opera) positively refused ; producing the watch, (which he asserted had been given him) as a pledge of his truth.

The inevitable consequence of such a quarrel followed. De Brissac would have urged its settlement on the spot, but Vaux would not thus lightly face the chance of death. He had affairs of moment which must, he said, be settled first, and it was, therefore, arranged that they should meet in a retired spot in the *Bois de Boulogne*, early on the following morning. Neither of the English gentlemen were acquainted with de Brissac, but they had met

him at the Tuilleries occasionally, and thus knew him by sight; he was *noble* by birth, received in society, and so came within the pale of those who are privileged to defend crime by deliberate and sanctioned murder.

After the arrangement of this affair, Vaux returned slowly to his hotel. On entering his apartment he was met by his old servant, who, with the evident hope of cheering the depression under which his master had been long labouring, informed him, in a tone of great satisfaction, that Sir Philip and Miss Beaumont had just arrived at that very house, and intended, the *garçon* had learned, to remain there during their stay in Paris. A cold thrill passed through Vaux. Had he heard the news an hour or so previously, he would have regretted the chance that thus threw him once more in the Beaumonts' way; now it appeared to him as if heaven permitted him to see Helen once more before he died; for he had a

strong impression on his mind that the duel would prove fatal to him. But how was such an interview to be achieved? Sir Philip would not he feared, admit him to his daughter's presence. On what plea, indeed, could he demand an interview, save on that, which would reveal his deadly appointment? He could think of none, and was compelled to leave the desired last look to chance.

With a sigh, therefore, he desired Thomas to get his pistols, and clean them, and then seating himself at his desk, prepared to arrange his temporal affairs. It was a solemn occupation that willing away of the wealth that had brought him no happiness; but he endeavoured to make by it, in some sort, an atonement to society for the little good he had hitherto done. Several poor gentlemen—brother officers of his own, in past days—were enriched by that last testament, and many charities had legacies left them; the surplus of his vast fortune was

made over to Helen Beaumont. It gave him, whilst thus face to face with death, a thrill of pleasure that he could *then*, at least, show how tenderly he loved her.

Thomas moving about the room, watched all these proceedings with ominous distrust; he guessed what had occurred, and when Vaux ordered him to have a *fâcre* at the door by five the next morning—his guess became a conviction. But the officer's servant—an Irishman—sorry as he felt, had too much of the conventional sense of honour about him, to dream of impeding such a proceeding. He simply asked, in a respectful tone, “with whom his master was going out?”

And Vaux, indulgent to a faithful and privileged domestic, replied as briefly, “with Monsieur le Vicomte De Brissac.”

“Trusty Thomas,” as his master was wont to call him, after completing all arrangements committed to him, left the apartment, and

Vaux remained alone with his own thoughts. They were very sad. No man, save the hardened and brutalized duellist, who has seared his conscience, *can* think of such a mode of death unmoved. The sacrifice of life in battle, or as an offering in some holy cause, has something exciting and ennobling in it, which raises and supports the spirits, and masters, by a superior energy, the instinct of self-preservation; but to stand up to be shot in cold blood has something chilling and terrible for the imagination, and Vaux was a highly imaginative person.

The prejudices of his education and profession had rendered him insensible to the sin of the action *on reflection*, but his lion-like nature abhorred it, "by instinct," as Falstaff would have said; and it was with a very heavy heart that he at length rose from his seat and prepared to retire to his chamber. Lingeringly he traversed the passages leading

to it, his mind full of wild hope that he might once more catch a glimpse of Helen ; and the hope, as it chanced, did not prove vain. As he passed an open door leading into a sitting-room, and glanced furtively in, he perceived Helen Beaumont alone, seated at the table, and bending over a book. She did not look up as he entered, but said, simply—

“ Well, John, is papa come back ? ”

“ Helen ! ” he exclaimed in a trembling voice.

She started up, gazed at him with amazement, and then uttered a low cry. He was so deadly pale, and his countenance wore so solemn an expression, that (ignorant of his near neighbourhood) she yielded to superstitious terror, and believed she saw his ghost.

“ Vaux ! ” she cried. “ Are you come from the dead —— ”

Her voice failed ; she would have fallen,

had he not supported her and placed her on a chair.

“I am living, Helen!” he said, gently, “though God knows how few hours of mortal life may be left me. And it is because I stand, perchance, on the threshold of eternity, that I presume to enter your presence and beg for your forgiveness.”

“What do you mean?” she gasped forth.

“That I may possibly die to-morrow, at least my life will be exposed to great and inevitable peril. I cannot die without your pardon. Say you forgive me?”

She could not speak; she looked up to him in mute terror.

“Oh! do forgive me,” he continued; “Helen! I have been thinking very solemnly, and of awful subjects to-night, and I now despise myself for my jealous and foolish pride. Say you forgive me?”

She passed her hand with a troubled and perplexed look across her eyes.

“How strangely you are talking,” she said, “in danger of death to-morrow? How? Why?”

“I may not, in honour, tell you. Say only you forgive me.”

“I have nothing to forgive you,” she said, tremulously, “nothing. God knows I have never felt a moment’s anger with you.”

He thanked her earnestly.

“But this danger,” she continued, “you are going to fight a duel I suppose? Oh, pray, Mr. Vaux, do not. It is quite another affair, and much more dangerous in France than in England, and though I have no very clear notions on the subject, it does appear to me a great sin to fight a duel. Pray, pray do not!”

“Nay,” he said, “I thought you had too keen a sense of honour to talk thus. Besides, I did not say it was a duel that threatened me; there are many other perilous things in the world.”

“But none that you could thus foresee ! Let me persuade you, Mr. Vaux, not to peril your life so foolishly. Do not follow this evil fashion. Your courage and honour are too well assured, for you to dread an imputation on them.”

She pleaded with great earnestness, and though she endeavoured to make her tone only that of friendly expostulation, it assumed, in spite of herself, an expression of anxious tenderness. He was much moved.

“Helen,” he said, “I have so fair a quarrel, and my cause is so just that I would not, if I might, be clear of it. I am sorry I am compelled to distress you by revealing it thus far, but in no other way could I justify my intrusion on you or ask for your forgiveness. I bless and thank you for it. Farewell.”

He took her hand whilst speaking, and as he uttered the last word, he pressed it to his lips, and rapidly retreated, averting his face that she

might not see how much he suffered at thus leaving her.

“Stay, stay,” she cried, but he was gone, and after standing for an instant in painful agitation she hurried to the bell and rang it violently.

“Send John—send the sailor who is below to me,” she said, to the waiter who answered the summons.

Jack was in the room in a few seconds.

“Jack,” said his young lady, “Mr. Vaux is here, and I rather fancy, from what I have heard, that he is going to fight a duel. Is there any way of discovering with whom? and where he will meet his adversary?”

“Well, my lady, I can tell you. I have just been having a bit of supper with Thomas, his man, and he was so full of winks and sour looks and hints, that I axed him what was in the wind; and he told me as how his master was agoing to fight a duel with Monsieur the Vicomte de Brissac, to-morrow morning, in the Bois de Boulong—at five o’clock.”

“ De Brissac ! with that wretch ! He ought not to speak to him, much less to treat him as a man of honor. Where *can* papa be ?”

“ Acoming now, miss, I hears his step in the passage.”

Sir Philip entered at that moment, and his daughter eagerly told him what was about to happen. Her father was much excited.

“ Vaux will not be dissuaded from such a meeting, I am certain,” he said, “ nay, if I told him of De Brissac’s conduct towards yourself, it would but give him a new motive for wishing to shoot the rascal ; but I can prevent it. At what hour did you say they were to meet, Jack ?”

“ At half-past five, your honour.”

“ Well, order a carriage for me at five, precisely, and ascertain the exact spot—or (never mind, that may be difficult,) we will drive after Mr. Vaux *fiacre*. And now, Helen, I must leave you again for a little time, and proceed to the prefect of police. We will

soon put a stop to this De Brissac's insolence. Desire them to let me have a carriage immediately, Jack."

As the seaman left the room, Sir Philip embraced his daughter.

"To bed, sweet one, at once," he said, "leave Vaux safety in my hands, I will be careful of it."

CHAPTER VII.

SIR PHILIP soon reached his destination. The Préfect of Police readily agreed to send some of his myrmidons with him on the morrow, to pursue Vaux and interrupt the duel, by arresting De Brissac ; and when the baronet returned to the hotel, he tapped at his daughter's chamber door to bid her be at ease, for Vaux's safety was assured.

Alas ! we can be *assured* of not an hour's safety in this uncertain state. Destiny was

too strong for Sir Philip Beaumont, and the prefect of police.

It happened by the strange perversity of what we are pleased to style Chance, that the *fiacre* Vaux had ordered, arrived five minutes before the appointed hour, and Sir Philip's five minutes after.

"They have the start of us by about ten minutes," said the official, who greeted Sir Philip, whilst he was in the act of complaining of his driver's want of punctuality, "but it does not matter Monsieur, I know the locality so well, that we shall soon be with them."

"Ten minutes ! and in a matter of life and death," exclaimed Sir Philip, "for Heaven's sake tell him to drive at full speed, Jack, and I will give him a Napoleon, if we are in time."

Jack sprang upon the box to enforce this order, and proffered reward on the "*cochon* !" as he persisted in calling the coachman, and they proceeded at a good rate. But they did *not*, spite of the policeman's boasted dexterity,

find the rendezvous as readily as he had anticipated, and at the very moment (when on reaching a secluded place at some little distance from the spot where they alighted), the man exclaimed—

“ *Les voici !* I was sure we should find them here !”

The report of a pistol reached their ears. Sir Philip sprang forward—Alas ! they came too late. Vaux lay on the earth bathed in blood. The Baronet bent over him in deep and earnest grief ; for he had loved him as his own son or brother, and in the depth of his sorrow heeded not the policeman and Jack, who had meantime secured De Brissac, and his second.

“ Is he dead ?” he asked of the surgeon, who was examining the fallen man.

“ No, Monsieur ! he lives, but he is frightfully wounded. I fear mortally.”

Beaumont groaned.

“ We must bear him to the nearest hotel,”

said the surgeon, "and see what can be done for him."

Whilst they were employed in lifting the wounded man into the carriage, Jack approached and touched Sir Philip's arm."

"If you please, Sir——"

"Well, what is it?" asked his master, impatiently.

"That ere chap, Sir, is a thief—he has the watch that was stole from me at the inn."

"Go and tell the police; I have no time to think of him now."

And Sir Philip accompanied Vaux and his friends—*i. e.* his second and the surgeon—to a neighbouring hotel, and remained till everything had been done that skill could do for the sufferer. Then he returned to the anxious and expectant Helen. She had waited for tidings for several hours, and was pale and sick at heart at the delay which had intervened. She sprang up eagerly as Sir Philip entered the room, but sank again on her seat

as she caught a glance of his troubled countenance.

“Father! He is dead.”

“No, Helen, he lives, but he is hurt. We were too late to prevent De Brissac’s fire, and Vaux is wounded.”

“Mortally?” she asked, in a tone of quiet despair.

“Dangerously, I fear.”

There was a few minute’s pause. Her father could see the beating of her heart.

“Where is he?”

“At the hotel—very near the place of meeting.”

“Is he alone?”

“No, he has a friend, and the surgeon—two surgeons indeed—with him.”

“Dear father,” she said, earnestly, “you love him—go to him—watch over him—be a father to him.”

“And you, Helen? You will be wretched if I leave you here alone?”

“No, no; I shall feel so confident in your care. Oh go!”

He kissed her.

“I will then, love. I shall like to be with him, myself; you will be quite safe here. Basil and Jack shall be your guardians.”

“No—take Jack with you—he may be useful—he loves his officer. Oh, what a fate, after escaping the perils of that fearful Alpine journey. Do not delay, dearest papa, go to him at once.”

Sir Philip saw he should best comfort her by doing as she requested, and he therefore complied with her desire, and satisfied his own anxiety by returning to the wounded man's bed-side. Helen retreated to her chamber—an overwhelming sense of misery oppressed her. She threw herself on her knees, and buried her face on a *prie-dièu*; it was long before she could weep or pray—but she did both at last, and rose in an hour with renewed fortitude and something like hope. He was not

dead ! He might be restored at her entreaty.

The evening brought her father to her for half an hour. Vaux was very bad—his arm was so dreadfully injured near the shoulder that its amputation was inevitable. This had been performed, and the result could scarcely yet be divined. But he gave Helen no hope, dreading lest it should prove fallacious, and entail a heavier pang hereafter. Her agony at the idea of what Vaux must have endured, and of his being thus mutilated, was extreme ; no sorrow of her own had ever thus affected her, but she restrained all expression of her feelings before her father ; it was only in solitude that she gave vent to her anguish, in tears and prayers.

She reproached herself for being in some measure the cause of his suffering ; not that she knew how much she had had to do with the duel, but because she felt that if she had been fully worthy of him, he would not have fallen in the way of de Brissac. Here arose a

new source of self-reproach for her error with Basil.

The Tyrolese enquired for her once or twice, but she would not see him; he was so intimately connected with her cause of grief that his very name had grown painful to her; indeed she had avoided him during the journey, and he had carefully refrained from intruding his presence on her. But in the midst of her present distress, she did not forget his anxiety to be with his family, and she reminded Sir Philip of it.

“You kept him to recruit his strength,” she said, “and that he might travel with us free of expense, but this delay must be very painful for him. Do give him some money and let him go home at once.”

Sir Philip readily assented, and Basil, (though unwilling to leave them, during this period of anxiety,) was persuaded by the Baronet, as well as by his own longing heart, to return at once to Audrey.

He had heard from her; he knew that she had found her father, and he pictured to himself, daily, the happy group beneath his English roof-tree.

His journey homewards was easy and prosperous, but impatience lengthened the way, and he thought the miles interminable, though hourly lessening, which separated him from his home.

At length, one warm May evening, bordering on June, he found himself at York, and was speedily driving with all possible speed towards Audrey's new dwelling.

His heart beat high with happiness. The very air he breathed seemed balm—and, in truth, it was redolent with all the sweets of the English spring, for the hedge-rows were silvered with snowy blossoms, and the fresh, tender, green leaves of the linden tree emitted on both sides of the lane their subtle and peculiar sweetness. The old house to which he drove up, had lost its air of desolation now,

and looked a neat, comfortable homestead. Tom had been active in improving its external appearance, for, seaman-like, he possessed great ingenuity, and a smattering of carpentering skill, and he had also love for gardening.

It was wonderful what he had done for the place. He had mended, and painted, and glazed; and dug the flower beds, and trained the creepers; while within doors, his daughters had brought the dwelling to the very perfection of rural prettiness and neatness. Ivy and honeysuckle flaunted over the once broken old porch, flower pots and boxes for *mignionette* filled the windows, and a caged thrush sang cheerily from within.

The carriage wheels brought the little family to the window. Tom and Mary, Audrey and the baby; and when they saw who it was, Basil heard through the closed casement a cry of joy as Audrey gave Mary the infant, and flew to

meet him. The next moment she was in his arms.

“Basil, Basil ! my own Basil, you are come at last !”

He pressed her to his heart.

“It has been a weary separation, my Audrey ; but we will never part again.”

“God grant it. And now come in ; there are relations to introduce to you, Basil,” she said, with a joyful sob—“a father—a sister.”

And she drew him into the parlour. Tom advanced, looking a little anxious ; he was uncertain as to how he might like his son-in-law, but the simple grace of the young musician’s manner re-assured him, and they exchanged a cordial greeting.

Basil next received John’s, welcome whose joy at his favourite’s return, was deep and wordless ; and then Mary was presented, to the Tyrolese’s great surprise ; and last, but far from least, came baby. How he kissed it, and

looked into its tiny features for some gleam of resemblance to his wife. The infant smiled upon him, and pressed his finger in its tiny hand, as if it knew and acknowledged him, and with a low, murmured blessing, he returned it to its mother.

Then there were busy preparations for giving the traveller refreshment, and Audrey would not talk to him, nor hear his account of his adventures till he had eaten, sitting beside him herself, and gazing on him with something of the wistful look with which that loving animal, the dog, regards a long absent master.

And because it was cold in that northern county, even in the month of May, they gathered, as the twilight closed in, round a blazing fire, and there listened to and related in turn the incidents which had filled up the eventful space of time since they parted. How Audrey's heart beat, as nestling close to her

husband, she listened to his account of the entombed village, and how she blessed Jack and Vaux as he proceeded.

Tom was much gratified at the praise Basil bestowed on Jack, to whose suggestions and aid he affirmed, they owed the deliverance of the villagers from the avalanche.

“He is a good fellow—as kind a messmate as ever sailed under English bunting,” he said, “I have known him from a boy—he is but young yet—and I love him as a son. He has his whims, as most seamen have, but they are such, that one loves him the better for them. If Audrey here hadn’t been and chose for herself, I should have liked to see him her husband—no offence meant, son Basil.”

Basil smiled at the idea of Audrey’s union with Jack—but agreed in thinking him an excellent creature; and then turning to Audrey, asked—

“How she had discovered her father, as

her letter had only mentioned the fact without giving any details."

She then related her story, in which it became necessary to inform Basil of the disagreeable fact, that he was quite penniless, and that she had been compelled to toil for their daily bread.

He was pained at her past sufferings and anxiety, but he bore his own loss very patiently. It could be retrieved, and even, if not, he had been blessed with so many mercies, of late, that he dare not murmur.

"But why, my dear, little, busy, clever wife, did you not sell the piano?" he asked.

"Oh no! Basil, I would *almost* rather have begged. Besides, Johnnie's money came and made it needless. Indeed, I think you must thank Johnnie for it, since he saved it. Oh! you don't know how kind he has been, and is; he works for us now, and writes so finely,

I believe he could keep us all. He is quite a great poet ; there are even things in the newspaper about him, and he writes the sweetest little stories, which sell best of all. Dear Johnnie."

"Quite time I came home then," said Basil, gaily. "A poet and a story-teller ! I should not have dared trust my wife with such a dangerous character if I had known it. But seriously, dear brother ;" and he took John's hand, and pressed it fervently, "I thank you."

"Nay," said John Page, colouring with pleasure, "remember how much I owed you all. I am very glad, very grateful that I am able to do something in my turn."

"And, Basil, hoping you would come back soon, he has had the piano tuned, and put in order, that you may use it as soon as you like."

"I will thank him then, as he best likes," replied Basil.

And rising, he led Audrey to the piano, and soon their voices blended in a Tyrolese evening hymn.

Thus, in quiet, domestic happiness, and in music meet for charming sleep, closed the day, on the united and thankful little family.

CHAPTER VIII.

“HE is very ill, Helen ; quite delirious, and in a high fever. I greatly fear we shall not save him.”

Sir Philip did not add that Vaux raved wholly of herself.

“And his murderer ?” she asked, tremulously ; while, for the first time, a feeling like revenge awoke in Helen’s heart.

“For his felonious conduct with respect to yourself, and for the robbery committed on

Jack, of which he is thought to have been cognizant, I think they will doom him to the galleys for some years. God forbid that Vaux's death should make the punishment perpetual. But I am ill versed in French jurisprudence ; I scarcely know what fate awaits him yet."

"The monster!" she exclaimed ; "what caused the quarrel between him and Vaux?"

Sir Philip avoided a direct reply ; he had, from the poor sufferer's wild words, guessed the truth, and would not embitter Helen's sorrow by telling her, how much love for her had had to do with the unhappy affair.

It was a time of terrible anguish and suspense for her.

And here we must pause to observe how very little we can judge of happiness by outward seeming. A mere worldly spectator comparing the fates of Audrey and Helen—beholding all the care, and toil, and privation, and difficulty, that had gathered round the former,

and the luxury, and splendour, and tender, parental love which surrounded the spoiled child of Fortune, would have awarded the palm of happiness to Miss Beaumont; whilst, in fact, (so much more potent is the internal life in deciding our bliss or woe,) the trials of the great heiress had been far worse to bear than those of the lowly peasant. Disappointed affection and self-reproach would weigh down heavily a scale balanced only by the anxieties of poverty and toil.

Helen's present torture could not be very lasting; the end, one way or the other, *must* come; and, by degrees, a faint hope of amendment dawned. Vaux had slept; his fever was subsiding; and finally, after many alternations of doubt and fear, he was pronounced out of danger, though weak in the extreme. His gratitude to Sir Philip for his care was lively and fervent.

"I did not deserve such friendship," he

said ; “and yet—it was in Helen’s cause I fell.”

And he related the story of his quarrel with De Brissac to the indignant Baronet. Sir Philip explained how De Brissac had obtained the watch.

“His servant stole it from Jack,” he said, “at an inn ; and, as De Brissac declares, sold it afterwards to him. The valet, on the contrary, avers that his master saw and recognised the watch in Jack’s hands, and ordered him to purloin it. It is thought, however, that De Brissac’s is the truer version of the story, as it was almost impossible that he could have known the watch in a man’s hands at a distance, and if he had been near Jack, our gallant sailor would have recognised him.”

“Where is De Brissac now ? did he get off ?”

“No ; he is in prison.”

And Sir Philip related the events already known to the reader.

Vaux's indignation was extreme.

"I will use all my influence with the Minister of Police to get him punished," he exclaimed. "How could you let him remain at liberty so long? Why did you not pursue him energetically? The Paris police would have found him anywhere."

"Helen had a natural and womanly objection to her name being brought before the Parisian public; therefore, I prevented his apprehension, not intending, after my first burst of anger was over, to prosecute him. I was wrong—I gave him power by my own injustice to injure others."

"But *now* it will be made public?"

"Yes, Helen, at once, consented to my having him arrested, when, by so doing, I might have prevented the duel. I came, as you know, too late."

Vaux turned away his head, that Sir Philip might not see the tears that filled his eyes.

“He will be punished now in the galleys, I doubt not,” continued Sir Philip; “and as soon as his trial is over, (which will be shortly, now you are out of danger,) we shall return to England.”

“I dare not ask to be allowed to travel with you,” said the invalid, timidly.

“I think you had better not, Vaux, for Helen’s sake and your own.”

“But, Sir Philip, I have bitterly repented of my jealous folly. The night on which I took what I believed to be a last farewell of Helen, taught me all the littleness of my conduct, all her matchless worth. Can you, will *she* forgive me?”

“I dare say she will not be implacable,” replied Beaumont, kindly; “and, for my own part, your conduct in revenge of the aspersion

cast upon her name, is a sufficient satisfaction for the offence you once gave. But just at present you are weak and depressed from suffering, and fancy yourself under an obligation to me. We are all aware that the thoughts and resolutions of a sick-bed, seldom accord with those of the invalid's restored health. I will not yet allow you to alter your previous decision. Get well; follow us to England; and in six months, if your mind is unchanged, I will present you to Helen as her suitor."

Vaux pleaded hard against this sentence; declaring that he could never be of a different opinion; that six months would appear six ages, *et cetera*; but Sir Philip was inflexible.

"Miss Beaumont's honour," he said, "required such a penance, and such a probation from one who had rejected her; and *he*, also, thought it essential to his daughter's happiness that Vaux should have every assurance of never regretting his change of opinion."

“But you will tell Helen of my repentance, and of the probation you exact?”

“No, indeed; I cannot be sure of the result—pardon me, Vaux, but I *must* be plain with you—and I would not give her a repetition of her past mortification for worlds.”

Vaux was compelled, unwillingly, to submit.

The trial of De Brissac followed shortly after this conversation. The enormity of the offence, the injury done to one high in the royal confidence, and held in estimation by the ministry, and the otherwise abandoned character of De Brissac, all concurred to make his sentence a severe one. Leaving it to be carried into execution, the Beaumonts quitted Paris for England.

Helen was secretly surprised and grieved that Vaux had made no overtures towards a reconciliation. She believed that he persisted in sacrificing love to his fastidious delicacy,

and she determined to make the like sacrifice to maiden pride and dignity. There was no faltering in this resolution ; she kept up a tone of cheerfulness with Sir Philip, she occupied herself mentally in many ways ; and when they finally settled at Crowhurst, she became active in visiting the poor, and caring for their interests.

When Jack thus found himself in the immediate neighbourhood of Charliewood, a strong desire took possession of his mind to visit the Dabneys, and call the fair Annette to an account for the falsehood she had told him, which had so long mystified and embarrassed poor Tom ; besides, he thought that as he shortly intended to visit Yorkshire and see his old shipmate before he again tempted the seas, it would be as well to be able to bear him some tidings of this branch of his family.

The resolution once taken was soon carried into effect. One fine July afternoon,

Mrs. Dabney was sitting down to a "genteel" cup of tea with her neighbour, Mrs. Ford, and the new married people, Mr. and Mrs. Alton, (once Phœbe Ford,) and Jonathan, (whose pompous presence now wore rather a rueful and crestfallen air, for he had suffered severely of late from the shrewish and domineering temper of his spouse,) sat meekly and pipeless in the chimney corner ready to wait on the guests. A rap at the open door, and his shadow thrown across the porch announced the presence of Jack.

Mrs. Dabney looked up, and recognising her former visitor, rose, and with the most repulsive of frowns, demanded—

"What he wanted?"

Jack made a step past her into the room, and bowing to the assembled company, replied, that—

"He wished to speak a word with the Sextant."

Jonathan rose on hearing himself thus designated, and advancing, said—

“*I* am Mr. Dabney. What is your business?”

“I wanted to ax you, Master Dabney, then,” replied Jack, “if so be you hadn’t once a brother who was called Tom?”

“To be sure I had, poor fellow; but he’s been dead these many years, and awful to relate, I don’t believe, as he had christian burial.”

“No, thank God, he hadn’t!” ejaculated Jack; “and I hope he won’t neither, for many a year to come. Why, Master Dabney, your brother ain’t dead, and never has been, and I’m blessed if I see the use of all this Sham-Abraham. It’s brought him into a mess once already, and may again.”

“What do you say? my brother living still!” cried Jonathan, waking from his usual dull stupor at this astounding news; “Tom alive again.”

“Ay, ay; a pretty sort of a Sextant you are not to have taken a better observation of his true altitude,” said Jack, intending to be witty on what he deemed the sexton’s “queer rating.”

Jonathan did not comprehend him, and if he had, his reply would still have been forestalled by his sharp wife.

“A pretty story, upon my word,” she exclaimed; “Jonathan, you won’t surely be took in by such an imposition. *Of course*, it ain’t true.”

“Not so fast mistress,” said Jack, indignantly; “I should like to know what you see in the cut of my jib that you should go for to take me for a imposter. ’Caus you sails under false colours yourself, you needn’t, sure, suspect your messmates.”

“The vulgar wretch !” exclaimed Mrs. Dabney, affectedly. “I can’t understand his language.”

“Can’t you, ma’am? Your betters does then; but I’ll try and explain. Didn’t you, when I came to ax after my old messmate’s gal, tell me that she had a-married a organ-grinder, who went about with a monkey and white mice? and was it not a *lie*?”

“*I*,” shrieked Mrs. Dabney, “*I* told you so. *I* say that Munseigon Fiddlekin was a organ-man? Oh, the wretch!”

And she looked for sympathy towards her guests.

“Sure now, Mrs. Dabney never could have said such a thing,” ejaculated gossip Ford. “It ain’t possible!”

“But it were, ma’am,” cried Jack, “I remember every word said from the time I first spoke her. Says I, ‘Does the daughter of one Tom Dabney live her?’ Says she, ‘No, she did, but she’s married and gone.’ Says I, as civil-spoken as could be, ‘Will you please, ma’am, to tell me her husband’s name,

and where she's gone? I don't ax out of idle curiosity, but for a friend who loved her father, and wishes to do her good.' Says she, 'I can't say as I know where she's gone, for she's married a foreign musician, and a' most broke her uncle's heart.' Says I, 'I'm sorry for that. Was he one of them chaps with monkeys and mice that goes about with a organ?' Says she, flatly 'Yes.' If that weren't a falsehood, I'd like to know what is?"

And Jack glanced appealingly and indignantly round on his audience.

"I shan't demean myself to contradict you!" exclaimed Mrs. Dabney, her nose growing very red indeed, while she fanned herself with her handkerchief. "If Jonathan had the least bit of spirit, he wouldn't allow his wife to be so insulted."

At this rebuke the Sexton interposed; but not quite in the manner she expected. Jonathan's mind never could take in more than one

idea at a time, and now it was occupied by the astounding fact, that somebody had asserted his brother was alive. He began on that.

“Poor Tom alive! Bless me, how can it be? What proofs have you to give me, good man?”

“Well, I ain’t got any proofs except hisself—and he’s proof enough, surely. If you’ll go down with me into Yorkshire, or ax him to come and see you here, that will be best proof, old fellow. I can give you his latitude and longitude. I got my lady, Miss Beaumont, to put it down for me, seeing I ain’t a scholar. Here it is.”

And he drew a crumpled bit of paper from his pocket.

Basil had left his address with Jack, when he quitted Paris, and the seaman knew from Audrey’s letters to her husband, that Tom was there also.

Miss Beaumont’s well known name, made a

sensible impression on Jack's auditors ; even Mrs. Dabney looked anxious, and disposed to give him more credit than at first.

The sexton gazed earnestly on the address for some seconds.

“ Well,” he said, at last, drawing a long breath, “ it's easy to prove the truth of it. But if he ain't dead, where's he been all these years ?”

And Jack, taking up Tom's story at the beginning, gave a full and faithful detail of his friend's misfortunes and errors, to which all listened with wonder. Mrs. Dabney, as he paused in his somewhat verbose relation, exclaiming—

“ Shameful ! to deceive his brother, and sham to be dead, all for the sake of getting other folks to keep his child.”

This hint darkened the sexton's brow, but Jack perceiving it, interposed his ready wit to avert the storm.

“ It wasn’t for no such reason, ma’am,” he said, “ poor Tom would have been glad to have his gal, but he was a little afeard of his brother; that is, he had a great respect for him.”

“ It didn’t do, Jack,” he said to me, “ to bring disgrace to a respectable man as had such a rating on the church’s books, as my brother had. Folks wouldn’t have believed my story, and then the shame of my wild ways would have fallen on him, who didn’t deserve it.” He loves and respects his brother, does Tom.”

“ Poor fellow,” said the sexton, with a sigh.

And Jack re-assured in his office of peacemaker, proceeded, and brought his tale down to the present moment, when Tom was comfortably installed in his daughter’s home; ending with a warm eulogy on Audrey’s husband.

At this Jonathan looked grave, and shook his head.

“I’m glad Tom’s alive,” he said, “it has been a sore grief to me many a year, that he and I should have parted for ever ill friends, and my heart’s much the lighter to find that we may meet once more. But for that Hurr Fiddlekin, I never wish to see him no more. He made love to my wife afore my face, and threw her into dreadful asteriss ; and then he carried off my niece, as good a girl before she knowed him, as ever lived, and a great comfort to me.”

“Made love to your wife !” cried Jack, in amazement ; “*which* wife, this ’un, or ’tother ?”

“To Mrs. Dabney, there !” said Jonathan, with dignity.

Jack surveyed his frowning hostess from head to foot, and scarcely restrained a titter.

“I’m blest if he mustn’t have been doing it for a lark, then ! and yet he seems too grave a

chap for that. Oh, master Sextant, there's some mistake. He never did mean to make love to her."

Mrs. Dabney's wrath, long gathering, reached its climax at seeing her powers of attraction thus utterly set at naught.

"I won't be used so," she shrieked; "I won't; Mr. Alton, if that great stupid fool of a husband of mine won't turn the wretch out, do you—or call the constable—I won't be used so, in my own house."

Little Mr. Alton, thus appealed to, looked in bewildered embarrassment at his wife and mother-in-law, and good-natured Mrs. Ford coming to the rescue approached Jack.

"Come, young man," she said, "don't forget that a brave man owes respect to females; come with me, Mr. Dabney will see you another time."

"He shan't, that he shan't," cried Mrs. Dabney, and in conformity with her usual

mode of proceeding, when very angry, she sank back fainting. Phœbe and Mr. Alton hastened to render her assistance, and Mrs. Ford drew Jack out of the cottage.

“It’s no use,” she said, gently, “to say any more now. Mr. Dabney will write to his brother, and thank you kindly, I am sure, another time, for your information. You see, he has a good deal to bear.” Jack shrugged his shoulders.

“I’d as lieve,” he said, “be married to a hurricane! His bell will never want a clapper whilst her tongue’s a-going. Poor old fellow! I really *do* pity him now. If I was he, I’d go to sea.”

Mrs. Ford smiled.

“He’s too old for that. Well, he might have chosen better, but there, you know, “hanging and wifing goes by destiny.”

“And if I wouldn’t a precious deal sooner swing at a yard-arm than have such a sea-gull

as that, screeching for ever alongside of me !” exclaimed Jack.

By this time they had reached the wicket, and Mrs. Dabney’s cries, (for her hysterics had begun) quickened Jack’s steps.

“ A good evening to you, ma’am,” he said, civilly to his conductress, “ my respects to the poor sextant yonder, and if he wants to see me in quiet, he will find me anchored in Crowhurst Park.

Mrs. Ford nodded farewell, and returned to the cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME two or three days afterwards the ponderous personage of the sexton of Charliewood was seen approaching the back entrance of Crowhurst. It was a burning day, and the fat man, greatly oppressed by heat and the fatigue of his walk, drew his breath with difficulty, and wiped his brow with his handkerchief, as he gained the house, and enquired for a seaman by the name of John.

“Is he here?” said the groom, whom he

addressed, "yes, he is, but you've only come just in time to see him, for he goes into the north with Sir Philip and our young lady to-morrow, and don't return here no more."

"Will you tell him that Mr. —, no, never mind the name," (Jonathan, whose visit was a stolen one, dreaded lest the housekeeper might hear of it, and convey the intelligence to his wife) "tell him a person wishes to speak with him—"

And as the man turned to comply with his request, the sexton sank exhausted on a seat. Jack was speedily beside him, and at his request, led him to a room where they could converse alone.

"I am come, young man," said Dabney, with as much dignity as he could assume, "to tell you that I am sorry my wife should have behaved so rudely to you the other evening. If I hadn't been so overcome like, at hearing that poor Tom was still alive, I shouldn't

have allowed it, I assure you ; as it is, I hope you'll look it over, seeing that woman is but the weaker vessel."

"The weaker vessel do you say," retorted Jack, "she poured a heavy broadside into you, and me too, notwithstanding, but I don't bear no malice, master Dabney, and *you* never gave me no offence."

"Thank you," said the sexton, "well, I am come to ask you to tell my brother for me, when next you see him, or write to him, that I am very glad to hear he's still alive ; that it's been a great grief to me to have parted in anger from him, and that I hope he'll come and see me soon. I would go to him, only I have so much parish duty just now, and—and Mrs. Dabney is so asterial."

"Ay, ay ; I see," replied Jack, with a nod, "I'll explain matters to him, and make all easy. He will come to you I'm sure, when he knows all about it."

“Tell him too,” said the old man, tremulously, “that I’ve had a sad miss of Audrey. She was the greatest comfort I ever had—God bless her.”

And the sexton passed his huge hand across his eyes.

“She’s a good lass, no doubt, Master Dabney; I heard a deal of her from her husband, Mr. Fiddlekin, who is as honest a chap as treads on leather. Don’t you believe a word of his makin’ love to the old dame, yonder. It *can’t* be true—why, the very marines would n’t believe it.”

“I don’t know,” said Dabney, doubtfully. “I came in at the middle of it, and saw the letter—and though you mayn’t think it, young man—Mrs. Dabney has a very takin’ way with her, when first she knows you.”

“Well, axing your pardon, I don’t think Basil’s the man to be took with such a north-easter of a phiz as hers; but it ain’t no con-

cern of mine. You'll take something after your long walk? We dine at one—and it's close on the hour."

"Does Mrs. Hardy head the table?"

"Yes, generally, Master Dabney."

"Then, thank you, I won't wait. I'll take a glass of beer and a crust at the Beaumont Arms, down in the village; and I shall be obliged to you, young man, if you won't mention my name to Mrs. Hardy."

Jack promised secrecy, and his guest then took a civil leave, the sailor watching him out of sight.

"Well, before I'd sail under a petticoat in that way—"he thought. "Why, he's afeard of all the old women in the parish. If ever *I* marries, I'll guide the helm myself, or know the reason why."

And with this doughty resolution, Jack retreated into the manor-house.

It was at Helen's request that Sir Philip

had resolved on visiting the north of England. Her ministrations amongst the poor had brought her favourite little village girl vividly to her mind, and now that Audrey was connected with Basil, and that Tom Dabney had also some claim on Helen's gratitude, her interest in her rustic *protégé* was doubled. She longed to see her in her humble home, and ascertain that they needed nothing; and she, therefore, proposed to Sir Philip, that they should visit York, and take Jack with them on his northward journey.

It may be that a secret longing for some change of scene, and distraction of her thoughts influenced Miss Beaumont, as well as her kind interest in Audrey—and probably Sir Philip thought so, when he gave a cheerful assent to her request.

It was glorious summertide when they reached York; and they had scarcely taken possession of their apartments in the —— Hotel, ere Jack came to ask if Miss Beaumont required him to do anything, or go anywhere,

as, if he was not wanted, he should set out, at once, for the cottage. He received permission to go where he pleased, and was desired, by his young lady, to tell Audrey that she should visit her the next day.

It was a lovely evening, but verging fast on twilight. As he entered the loneliest part of the road, he perceived a young girl, just before him, carrying a heavy basket and bundle, and moved by his natural and professional gallantry, he resolved, at once, to relieve her of her burden.

Approaching her, therefore, he wished her, very civilly a "good even." She turned on him a pair of flashing black eyes, but vouchsafed no answer. It might be shyness. Jack made another attempt at cultivating her acquaintance.

"You seem to have a heavy load to carry, miss," said he, "if you'll allow me, I'll help you with it."

“I dare say,” exclaimed the girl, tartly, “ease me of it very soon ! But you’d better be off. This road is not so lonesome as it looks, and if I cried out, I could soon have two or three to help me.”

“Why, you don’t sure, take me for a thief?” said Jack, indignantly.

“How should I know what you are ?”

“Can’t you see I am a seaman ?”

“Oh, yes ! mighty fine. There be heaps of fellows about these parts, who go begging, pretending that they’re shipwrecked sailors ; but if you come to question them, they don’t know the stem from the stern of a ship.”

“And do you, my pretty lass ?” he asked growing amused, for it was evident that she did not *really* mistrust him ; he suspected he had met with a rural *coquette*.

“Do I ?” scornfully, “as if I didn’t. Why, I’m a sailor’s daughter, and was all among sea-faring folks when I was little.”

“I like you the better for it. Come, question me, and if I prove true blue, let me carry your basket.”

“Do you know what I mean when I tell you to sheer off?” she asked, with a roguish smile.

“Any landsman could tell that. One may guess the sense of it.”

“Then, why don’t you obey it?”

“Because I ain’t bound to sail under your orders, miss.”

She laughed.

“Come,” she said, “tell me the names of all the ropes on board ship, and I’ll believe you.”

Jack complied quite gravely, enumerating, with the real list of cordage, a number of imaginary ones, which made his little companion laugh merrily.

“I see you *are* a seaman,” she said, “and I think your name is Jack Parker.”

Jack stood still in mute amazement for a minute, gazing on her with wondering eyes.

“Are you a witch,” he said, in an awed tone, “that you guess my name so easily?”

“Yes,” with a delighted giggle, “and I can tell you more than that ; you are going to see your old friend Tom Taylor, who now calls himself Dabney, and you won’t find him at home.”

“Well, if I ever!” exclaimed Jack, “I wouldn’t have believed it, unless I’d heard it with my own ears. Why, who are you?”

She laughed, broke suddenly into Ariel’s song :

“Where the bee sucks there lurk I.”

which she sang in a clear, sweet voice, and vouchsafed him no other answer.

Jack listened with pleasure, mixed with a scarcely defined feeling of awe. He was superstitious, like all seamen, and if the girl had been old and withered instead of such a sparkling, pretty brunette, he would probably have eschewed her company, darted over a hedge, and made off; as it was, he could scarcely believe his own senses.

They had now reached a turnstile, leading into a field, at which his companion paused.

“A good evening to you, Jack,” she said, “and thank you for your company. My way is through here, and yours straight on. Good bye.”

“Let me see you safe home?” he pleaded, “it grows late for such as you to be walking in lonely fields.”

“Oh, never fear for me; I’m used to this road; besides, you know I could ride upon a broomstick, if I liked.”

Jack would not intrude himself; he wished

her "Good even," and walked on; the lane turned and wound about *ad libitum*, but it ended finally at Tom Dabney's cottage, which was its only outlet. He knocked for admission, and, to his amazement, the door was opened by his little companion.

"Father ain't at home, sir," she said, demurely, "as I told you; but he'll soon be back from the farm, if you'll walk in and wait."

"What!" cried Jack, "is my little witch—Audrey? To be sure, I might have guessed it by your singing. Basil said you sang like a nightingale."

"No, but I don't; and I'm not Audrey, though I sang her song. Please to walk in—she'll be glad to see you."

Jack very willingly complied.

Jack remained that night at the cottage, welcomed by all as a dear and trusted friend. Audrey scarcely knew how to express her

gratitude to him, who had saved Basil's life ; she loaded him with thanks and kindness, and the sailor treated her with a reverential admiration, amusing to behold. He felt towards her somewhat as he did towards Helen Beaumont ; but his chief attention was involuntarily given to Mary, whose mirth and pretty shrewishness took his fancy greatly. Jack could not quite be said to have fallen in love with a girl of fifteen ; but he began to be uneasy at not having his smartest jacket on, and to think it was a pity that he was so much older than she was, and that rough weather and hard work had taken so much from his good looks.

“She'll be a pretty young woman by-and-by,” he thought, “only, to be sure, one had need keep a taut hand over her, if one would not be under petticoat government, like the old sextant.”

And this thought reminding him of Jona-

than, who, otherwise might have been forgotten, he gave the elder Dabney's message to Tom, and thus brought that worthy's satisfaction to a climax.

CHAPTER X.

VAUX returned to England as soon as his health permitted him to travel, impatient to be in the same country with Helen Beaumont, and eager for the termination of his time of probation.

It was a question with him where he should spend that tedious period. He dreaded the lonely splendour of his home—he was weary of wandering—and in this state of uncertainty, he recollected his brother's old tutor

to whom he had, some two years previously, given a living, and for whom he had long entertained a sincere regard. He would go and stay with him; he should be sure of a welcome there, and the wit, and quaint humor, and varied knowledge of his friend, would beguile the time of its tediousness, if any one could achieve such a miracle for him. So he wrote a long letter to the rector, informing him of his present delicate state of health, and its occasion, and begging his hospitality for a time.

He received, almost by return of post, the answer he had anticipated. Mr. M'Coy would be delighted to have him for his guest, and his Anna volunteered her best services as nurse. The rector did not express any fear that Vaux would be less comfortable at the rectory than at the castle, (his was an old baronial house) he knew better; but he did chide a little at the cause of his friend's mutilation, and

frankly stated his own views of the enormity of duelling.

The next day Vaux began his journey to the rectory.

His arrival was anxiously expected by our friends, the M'Coys, who were but little changed in appearance, and not at all in character, since we first introduced them to our reader. Their new rectory wore much the same air as their last home; the house was acquiring, or had acquired, a sort of physiognomy in sympathy with its master. A look of rural elegance and learned ease, of comfort and antiquarian tastes.

The good pastor himself, whom we shall once more present to our readers, seated in his study, book in hand, near the open bay-window, was grown a little more portly, and a little bald; but his delicately cut features bore the same impress of calm benevolence and serious thought, as of yore. Mrs. M'Coy sat near him.

at work, with the same look of love in her eyes whenever they fell on him; and close beside, arranging flowers in tapering glasses, sat a young girl of about nineteen or twenty, not pretty certainly, but delicate and interesting in appearance. She was a very little creature, with a fair skin, a fluctuating colour, small grey eyes, a little turned-up nose, and a profusion of very fair tresses, which fell on her shoulders. Her dress was exceedingly simple, and yet studied, and her expression singular, because perfectly unfathomable. She grouped the flowers with singular taste and skill, talking all the while, in a low voice, to Mrs. M'Coy.

“ You have seen this Mr. Vaux years ago, did you say ? ”

“ Yes, when first I married ; he was then very young.’

“ What is he like ? ”

“ He was very handsome and elegant—a

very distinguished-looking person, with a frank, sailor-like manner."

"And Mr M'Coy was once his tutor?"

"Oh, no; he was tutor to his elder brother; but that led to an acquaintance with this Mr. Vaux, then a younger son, and he (Vaux) formed a strong attachment to my husband, as every one does who knows him."

This last remark was uttered *sotto voce*.

"Of course," remarked the younger lady, nodding, "of course."

"Then," continued Mrs. M'Coy, "Mr. Vaux was comparatively poor—now he is immensely rich.

"Why has he not married?"

"Really I don't know, Louise—perhaps he is disposed to die a bachelor."

"No," said the rector, closing his volume, with a smile, "it is because—a good hint to young ladies, Louise—he has never yet found a perfectly natural, disinterested girl. He is a

little jealous of being loved for his wealth alone, therefore Cœlebs is still in search of a wife."

"Oh!" ejaculated the girl, and she continued her pretty pastime.

This young addition to the M'Coy's family was the child of a distant relative of the rector, who had married a French gentleman, and been very unfortunate. She had educated her daughter as a governess, and Louise had been, for a time, teacher in the *pension*, where she had been brought up; but her mother, on her death-bed, fearing to leave her child unprotected, and destitute in a (to her) foreign land, had written to the rector a touching and earnest letter, beseeching him to receive Louise, and provide her a situation in some English family, where he could occasionally see her, and watch over her welfare. Such an appeal could not be made to such a man in vain—he sent for the poor girl, gave her the shelter of his roof, and,

as she proved useful and agreeable, and had very taking, coaxing little ways; she gained so much affection from both him and his gentle Anna, that they became unwilling to part with her, and finally retained her as their adopted daughter.

The flowers were arranged, the old church clock, just visible through the trees, chimed six, and Mrs. M'Coy had begun to wish she had ordered dinner a little later, when the sound of carriage wheels driving rapidly up to the house, made her forget her anxiety for the fate of the turbot, while the rector rose from his easy chair, and hurried to the hall, to welcome his expected guest.

There were glad sounds of cheerful greeting as the gentlemen met, and in two or three minutes Mr. M'Coy ushered Vaux into the study.

"My wife, Vaux," he said, smiling, "I dare say you have not forgotten her; and Miss Delville."

Louise eagerly glanced up at the tall, elegant figure of the stranger, not less interesting to her because he wore his empty sleeve fastened to his dress. His gallantry was a strong appeal to her imagination.

Vaux paid but little attention to her presence. He saw in her nothing but a neat-looking country girl, and she had not—as she had hoped—the gratification of cutting up the wounded hero's dinner, his own servant attending and performing that service for him. He talked a great deal to the rector and his wife, but scarcely addressed a word to her, and Louise sat silent, listening earnestly and intently, and (if a little mortified at being so utterly disregarded,) still satisfied that she was thus gleaning a good insight into the character of the "great catch," seated opposite to her. For, from the moment she had heard his name mentioned, the young Louise had resolved to do her best in order to become lady of the

castle. It was a very wild scheme—wilder than she even guessed, for what chance had she, lowly and ordinary as she was, of winning him who had looked with indifference upon the fairest and most highly cultivated of the land—but she could not rightly estimate herself or the chances against her, and thus she blindly dared attempt the conquest of that obdurate, and now surrendered citadel, Vaux's heart.

When the gentlemen joined the ladies after dinner, Louise preserved the same modest and silent reserve; she rejoiced, when she heard Vaux frankly declare that he disliked music, because she sang but little, and the M'Coys seldom or ever asked her to try her really poor skill; this and many other hints of his peculiar tastes were stored up in her memory, to be used hereafter; and that night when she returned to her chamber, she was so busy with her little love plot, that she forgot to devour the

French novel, which, too generally closed the hours of wakefulness for her.

We have presented our readers the future rival of Helen Beaumont. Let them not start at the inequality of the pair thus opposed ; but rather reflect if it is not thus in life, and how often men's pampered vanity throws them into the power of designing, artful women, whilst happiness, hidden beneath the veil of bashful truth, escapes their grasp.

Louise had not an easy game to play. It was long before she could command more than the most ordinary politeness from Vaux. By degrees, however, as he became one of the family, and grew unavoidably intimate with her, he would look up at times with a pleased surprise at hearing her well timed voice echo some favorite opinion or taste of his own—unconscious that he had previously betrayed it to her lynx-like observation.

Such entire and perfect sympathy *was*

striking, and then there was a certain charm in her graceful and profound humility. She was the very opposite of Helen, and when the mind has been disappointed in one ideal, it is likely to turn to its contrast. Not that Vaux had ceased to love Miss Beaumont. She was still undisputed mistress of his heart, but he began comparing her with the artful, low girl, and suffering himself to be flattered and cajoled, indirectly, into giving her a place somewhere near the throne of his imperial and noble lady.

The M'Coys saw that Louise had a fancy for their guest, but to them she wore such a mask of guileless innocence, and simplicity that they suspected no design, and thought Vaux could scarcely do better than choose this poor child for his wife. They were, of course, altogether ignorant of his love for Miss Beaumont; and Mrs. M'Coy, with a kindly artifice, daily lauded Louise to her guest, and talked con-

stantly of her child-like ways and simple habits, and of the difference between her and fashionable young ladies. She had appealed to the favorite prejudice. Vaux's reason (or rather his self will) began to argue against his heart, and, if his better nature had allowed, he would have regretted that he had not tried Louise first. Sometimes, too, a doubt arose whether Helen would now accept him—mutilated as he was, and in part dependent on the aid of others; but an inward voice always rebuked the thought as unworthy of her.

CHAPTER XI.

AFFAIRS went on thus at the rectory, till the golden harvest brought the usual village festival. The rector rejoiced that thus far north, old customs were honoured better than in the southern lands, and gave his countenance to all the harmless glee and rural jollity, without excess, with which his people welcomed God's gift of the fruits of the earth. There was a

merry harvest home, and he and his wife, his guest, and Louise, all honoured the field with their presence, when the last load was carted.

It was a pretty scene. The golden stubble warmed by the rays of the declining sun ; the busy peasants, the gaily decked team, the waggon creaking under its graceful burden of gerbs, and the group of "gentles," who stood looking on, pleased with the hilarity around.

One of the countrymen approached them, and touching the lock of sun-faded hair that rested on his brow, asked with bashful courtesy, "if miss would like a ride upon the waggon." Mrs. M'Coy expected a negative reply, but Louise, with a truly French taste for dramatic and picturesque effect, saw at a glance how fair and elf-like she should look beside the rustic lasses who would attend her, and gave a gay assent. In a moment the carter had helped her to ascend, and she was seated triumphantly ere the rector could speak, or

Mrs. M'Coy glance at Vaux to see what *he* thought of it. When she did, she was startled at the gravity of his brow, and, as in reply to his look, she said :—

“She is so young and thoughtless.”

“And it would be a pity to disappoint her childish fancy,” he said, gravely, “but it is, quite improper for a lady to be seated up there with rude clowns. I will mount the load and attend her.”

Mrs. M'Coy cast a look at her husband, which said as plainly as a look could; “you see that Vaux cares for her. He is too fastidious to mount a harvest waggon for nothing.”

But her thoughts and glances were interrupted by a loud and sudden cry. Poor Vaux forgetful of his lost limb, had attempted to mount without the assistance of the ladder; the feat would once have cost him no trouble, but now —.

He missed his hold when near the top, and

fell back upon the earth. The cry came from Louise ; in some incredible way the young girl found her way in an instant down from the load, and threw herself on the earth beside him, shrieking wildly—

“ He is dead ! Vaux, beloved, dearest, speak to me.”

He raised his head, murmuring, “ I am not much hurt,” and fainted.

He had, in fact, fallen on the wounded side, and the agony of pain induced by the blow, was more than he could sustain. Mr. M'Coy, though greatly alarmed, retained his self-possession. He had the officer raised on a temporary bier formed from the board of the cart, and a party of stout carters bore him immediately (under the direction of the rector) to the parsonage ; Louise following with Mrs. M'Coy, in a passion of grief which she took no pains to conceal, and made no effort to restrain.

Vaux was carried to bed, and a surgeon sent

for ; he had received no serious injury, but it was judged expedient that he should keep his room, and remain as quiet as possible for a few days. During this seclusion, he thought much of Louise ; indeed, she was not willing that he should have leisure to forget her. The day following the accident, she sent him a bouquet by his man, in which he found a billet ; it ended thus :—

“ I am quite miserable at having caused you so much suffering ; pray forgive the childish, thoughtless folly that occasioned the accident ; it has caused me many tears. I wish I might do something to atone for my misfortune, but I am not permitted to nurse you, and try to amuse you, as I would fain do. Your speedy recovery is the fervent prayer of Louise.”

Vaux was distressed, puzzled, pleased and pained. It was very delightful to be so innocently and fondly loved by one, unworldly as the simple Louise, but Helen and his own

love, and his pledged honour to Sir Philip? He felt quite bewildered by the lady's partiality, which in truth he greatly over-rated. The fact is, Louise was an admirable actress ; all her tears had been shed in public, and though she remained much secluded in her own chamber during Vaux's indisposition, (a reserve which the M'Coys interpreted as the effect of shame and regret at having so publicly betrayed her secret) she did not pass her solitude in tears, but in French novel reading.

It was time, however, Helen's lover thought to put an end to this unlucky fondness, therefore overcoming, by a great effort, his proud shyness, he one day related to the rector the circumstances of his attachment to Helen, and in part the folly which had prevented him from making her his wife—his desire for his friend's advice, forming a pretext for this confidence ; since he would not for worlds have dropped a hint of his conviction that Louise loved him.

M'Coy listened with some vexation; he was disappointed for Louise's sake, and a little angry with Vaux, who had, in his strict judgment, trifled with her. When his friend paused, he told him frankly his opinion.

"I have no secret to keep for Louise," he said, "because her artlessness has, I am quite sure, betrayed her attachment to you; therefore I may say openly, that I think, under such circumstances, you ought to have left this house some weeks ago, and not have shown her the attention you did."

"I never dreamt of her misinterpreting ordinary civility; surely she cannot so far have deceived herself?"

"I fear she has," replied the rector, gravely, "she has been very little in society, and is so humble, that she is grateful for, and sensible of the least kindness. She would neither have expected or desired any extravagant devotion in a lover. I think she *has* mistaken you. *Anna* did."

The Rector uttered this last assertion in a tone which proved that he believed Anna nearly infallible. Vaux was much distressed.

“ I am very sorry,” he said, “ it is extremely unfortunate. I will go the moment I am able to leave my room.”

“ There is nothing in which we men, so often offend, as in matters of this nature,” remarked M'Coy, “ we are cruelly thoughtless of the feelings of those who are infinitely more susceptible than ourselves ; and want of thought is, in this instance, a cowardice and a crime.”

“ You are severe,” said Vaux, haughtily.

“ Not half severe enough, speaking generally. Male coquetry is one of the crying sins of the age. The state of society facilitates its practice and indulgence ; it may be exercised with impunity, because those who suffer have no refuge from it, and no defence. It destroys a woman's happiness by means of her

best and holiest impulses, and not only causes present pain beyond what we can conceive, but, by preventing any other attachment, frequently entails an unloved and solitary old age. Let those who have the memory of such trifling with another's happiness upon their souls, repent them; it is a cowardly, moral murder."

The rector spoke warmly, and for him, angrily; it was a subject that ever roused his indignation. Vaux agreed with him in opinion, but like all weak people, shrunk from taking the rebuke to his own bosom. He mastered, however, his first feeling of anger.

"I have chosen you for my confessor, M'Coy," he said, with a forced smile, "and therefore, I am bound to receive your reproofs as well as your counsel, meekly; though I do not really see that I am as much to blame as you infer."

"No?" said the rector, "why as far as I

could comprehend your rather confused statement, you made love to Miss Beaumont—won her affection—and left *her* because she had once had a girlish fancy for somebody else. Then you came here, and gained the first affections of a younger and less experienced woman, that you might in like manner reject her. Vaux—I love you—and therefore I tell you a harsh truth ; you have acted weakly, and not like an honest christian gentleman in this matter.”

“ With regard to Helen, you cannot reproach me more than I do myself, (though if I might in honor to her reveal them, there were extenuating circumstances in her case,) as to Miss Delville, I cannot allow that I have been to blame.”

The rector shrugged his shoulders.

“ May I ask,” he said, “ how you intend to act now ? Shall you propose again to Miss Beaumont, and do you believe she can or will pardon and accept you ?”

“I shall seek her pardon, and if, mutilated and unworthy as I am, she accepts me, I shall esteem myself a very happy man.”

“Vaux,” said the rector, gravely, “I knew something of that young lady a few years ago, and admired her greatly; but the dominant passion of her nature—the great fault of her character—appeared to me to be excessive pride. I can scarcely believe that after being once rejected, she would accept a second proposal from you. Should your present hopes prove vain, will you promise to think of my little girl?”

“I shall never marry, if Helen reject me.”

“You will indeed; you dislike a solitary life. The sorrow of your existence, hitherto, has been the want of a heart in which you could wholly confide. You must marry. If you choose again, Louise has a powerful claim on you.”

Vaux was much disturbed by this conver-

sation ; less, however, by the fact that he had won an innocent girl's affections, than by the doubt which Mr. M'Coy had expressed of Helen's acceptance of his intended offer. He was, as we have seen, a selfishly proud man. He had sacrificed Helen's happiness, as well as his own, to the idol of self, which quite unconsciously he worshipped.

How many shapes selfishness takes. How varying and deceiving are its forms. Now we call it fastidiousness—now delicacy—now pride—(which, strange anomaly among christian people ! is never deemed a *mean* vice), now it assumes the garb of affection, and calls itself—jealousy. Vaux, in the retirement of his chamber that night, nursed all these evil genii in turn.

“ His heart,” he said, mentally, (*i. e.* his selfishness) could not brook being second to any one in his wife's love, even though the first love were but a memory. His dignity

made him shrink from a possible reflection. He hesitated—wavered—and then his punishment, in the shape of Louise, stole into his imagination in her most winning form.

He spoke to the rector again the next day.

“I have reflected on your words of yesterday, M’Coy,” he said, and am come to the conclusion that as I am bound by no promise to Sir Philip or Miss Beaumont, nay, as the former absolutely doubted my persistence in my resolution—I may consider myself as free to act justly towards your relative—You think she loves me?”

“There is no doubt of it!” drily answered M’Coy, “the poor girl is actually ill from bashfulness and anxiety.”

“Then she shall have no longer cause to grieve—I will make her my wife.”

M’Coy grasped his hand and pressed it warmly.

“I am glad of it for both your sakes,” he

exclaimed, "I am sure she will make you happy, and I am equally certain that you would not have been happy with Miss Beaumont."

"You think so?"

"Yes, assuredly. You did not love her—nay, never tell me you did! If you had felt for her as I do for my Anna, you never could have left her, for no fault at all. And by-and-by, the fascination over, your old doubt, or jealousy, or whatever it was—would have broken out again, and the queenly Helen would have ill-brooked it. I am glad you *are* free. I am glad you have decided for Louise."

The rector was wrong, and Vaux was wrong.

The latter was misled by his selfishness, the former by pity and sympathy, for a helpless and orphan girl; but both believed themselves to have arrived at a most just and honourable conclusion, and persisted in it.

The next day Vaux proposed to Louise.

He was, of course, accepted; and her extreme and only half-concealed delight, her solemn assurance (in answer to his jealous questions) that she never had loved any one before, and the pretty ignorance she showed on all worldly matters completely charmed him, and reconciled him to the sacrifice, he fancied he had made to his dignity.

It was a very satisfactory wooing. His clever betrothed, "fooled him to the top of his bent." Her gratitude, her graceful humility, her devotion to, and admiration of himself completed the conquest she had begun. He loaded her with costly gifts, and secretly rejoiced that *she* could enjoy, and appreciate them in a manner that the wealthy Helen could not have understood.

Six months after the duel, the bridal-day was fixed.

Sir Philip Beaumont awaited the expiration of the prescribed period with some misgiving.

Helen had grown so cheerful, and appeared to have so completely put Vaux from her thoughts, that he now trembled at the idea of reviving her old feelings, and giving her up to one, whose character was not all that he could have desired in his daughter's husband ; but he had no cause for the anxiety he felt. It was speedily put to rest by the newspaper announcement of Vaux's approaching marriage, which, from being whispered abroad by the coach-makers, milliners, &c., &c., employed in the preparations for it, found its way into the *Morning Post*.

They were at breakfast—the father and daughter—when this intelligence met Sir Philip's eye, and sent a flush of indignation to his cheek. How he despised Vaux—how he loved his Helen, as his eyes rested on the paper ! He did not tell her of it then, but kept the paper by his side till their morning meal was ended ; and when, as was their wont,

they drew near the fire, to read together, he chose, for the subject of their morning studies, such portions of his and her favorite authors as inculcated a courageous endurance of life's evils, and a lofty view of its duties. He read aloud to her, selecting various portions of the many volumes which, (in accordance with his usual habit,) he had scattered beside him on the table, and she listened to his earnest and tender tones with more than her usual interest.

Pausing at length, he said,

“We are very happy together, my Helen. Our tastes and hearts are in such perfect accordance, that I scarcely regret the belief (which will intrude occasionally on my mind) that we shall never part.”

“And I rejoice at it,” she replied; “nothing now could reconcile me to the thought of living apart from my father.”

“So few could deserve you,” continued Sir

Philip, thoughtfully, "so few appreciate you. I did, at first, esteem Vaux worthy even of Helen Beaumont; but his brilliant qualities did but cover a cold and selfish nature."

"Do you think so?" she asked absently.

"Dearest, yes. If he had ever really loved you, as you really ought to be loved, but as he is incapable of loving—he could not so soon have given your vacant throne to another."

She started, turned pale, and questioned him with her eyes.

"He is going to be married, Helen. See here."

And he pointed out the newspaper paragraph. She took it, and read it with blanched cheeks and trembling lips; the last glimmering ember of hope, which had, almost unknown to her, lingered in her heart, was extinguished; but, with the pang of disappointed expectation, came an overwhelming contempt for her fickle lover.

With a proud coldness, she returned the paper to her father.

“I hope he may be happy,” she said, “and thank Heaven now, I did not exchange the home of the Beaumonts for that of Henry Vaux.”

“That’s my dear Helen. I knew you would not grieve for one like him.”

There was a pause for a few moments.

“Papa,” she said, breaking it, “I am more ashamed of having loved Vaux, than of my first wild fancy for the honest-hearted Basil; and yet I would not now wed *him* even if I might. Fortune is teaching me to estimate more fully my blessed lot as a daughter. I never could hope for a second home like that of my childhood.”

He drew her to his side, and kissed her.

“You are spared to me to be the comfort of my age,” he exclaimed. “For your sake, I lived a widower, my Helen; the sacrifice

(for in one instance it was such) will be rewarded."

"I would it had been by quite an involuntary devotion on my part, however."

"Nay, dearest, *then* I should have looked on you as a victim—as matters stand, Fate has been kind to both."

That afternoon, Miss Beaumont drove to Audrey's cottage. The domestic happiness and earnestness of its inmates always pleased her, and John's conversation had a freshness and charm for her, from the self-formed opinions and unconventional judgments, which it displayed. Bidding Audrey not interrupt her ordinary avocations, she took a seat beside the cripple's couch.

"You are looking a little pale to-day, Page," she said, kindly, "I fear you read and write now more than is quite good for you."

"Oh, no madam; my health, which is never very good, has been better ever since I have

had an occupation, the aim of which is not quite selfish. I am very grateful to you, Miss Beaumont, for the happiness you have given me, by enabling me to work for myself and others. You must be a very happy lady in your power of doing good."

She sighed.

"We have all some causes of sorrow, John," she said; "but I have great reason to be thankful for my lot, I believe."

He gazed thoughtfully on her downcast face, and a suspicion of the cause, which *might* be a sorrow to one so universally gifted, crossed his mind.

"We are all richly blessed, if we could but see it," he observed, in his low, calm voice, "though our blessings are seldom fully visible to us, till we hear the rustle of their departing wings. Only a poor cripple like myself, for instance, can tell how mighty a gift is bestowed on

those who have full power of all their limbs—who can walk, run, jump, and enjoy all the beauties of that glorious nature, of which I have only been allowed glimpses. A perfectly healthy body is a priceless gift.”

“A contented mind seems to me a greater, John. Tell me, have your bodily infirmities been always your greatest source of grief? Has your chief sorrow arisen from pain, and inability to move about?”

A deep colour mounted even to the brow of the cripple.

“No, madam,” in a low voice, “I have loved—and, of course, vainly.”

“Poor fellow,” she almost whispered. “I should not have thought it possible. And whom did you so honor, John?”

“Honor, madam! nay, you jest with me.”

“I do not, indeed; the love of such an honest and kind heart would honor any

woman. Did she, whom you loved, not think so ?”

“She never knew it, madam—I should not have dared breathe such folly in her ear—though she would not have despised me for it, I know well.”

‘It was Audrey then ?’

“Yes, Miss Beaumont.”

“Poor John ! How miserable her marriage must have made you. You have, indeed, suffered. How little do my vexations appear compared with yours. I cannot fancy how you have been able to drag on such a wretched existence, much less to be as cheerful as you are.”

“Strength is always at hand, if we seek it,” replied the cripple, solemnly, “and it was not withheld from me. On earth all was dark and hopeless—but I raised my eyes, and beheld light and a hope that could not fail, for it was changeless and immortal.”

The young poet raised his eyes, full of sublime expression, as he continued :

“ Cowper spoke truly,

“ Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.”

Dear lady, we only learn the true secret and meaning of life when we have learned to look beyond it.”

Helen was deeply touched.

“ You almost make me believe,” she said, “ that nature has blessed you, rather than afflicted you.”

“ Our Father can turn the direst sorrow into a blessing, if we receive it meekly, madam. I *do* believe He has greatly blessed me. I hope I see His mercy in all. Do you recollect,

Miss Beaumont, a paper in the Tatler on this subject?—a sort of allegory, written by Addison.’

She shook her head.

“If I might trouble you to give me the book—”

She rose, and brought it to him.

“It is here,” he said, after a few minutes’ search, “the Destinies had been ordered to bring to Jupiter’s feet the blessings of life; but being unable to distinguish them from its calamities, they laid *both* before him.

“O Jupiter, said they, we have gathered together all the good and evil, the comforts and distresses of human life, which we thus present before thee in one promiscuous heap. We beseech thee that thou thyself wilt sort them out for the future, as in thy wisdom thou shalt think fit. For we acknowledge that there is

none besides thee that can judge what will occasion grief or joy in the heart of a human creature, and what will prove a blessing or a calamity to the person on whom it is bestowed."

"'Tis a pretty and apt fable, Miss Beaumont, is it not?"

She assented, adding—

"I thank you for pointing it out to me, John. I will look the paper over when I return home, and endeavour to prevent my blessings from turning into calamities; and to make my so called calamities grow up into blessings."

Miss Beaumont reflected deeply upon this conversation; with no slight admiration of her humble instructor, whose meek patience, under circumstances of such painful trial touched her heart.

"To look at happiness through another's

eyes, so long," she thought, "to find blessings in such apparently overpowering miseries, is perfectly heroic. John Page, your example shall not teach in vain."

CHAPTER XII.

MISS BEAUMONT did not see Basil during their stay at York. He was from home.

The loss of all his former earnings had made it imperative on him to seek by renewed toil to provide a support for his wife and infant; therefore, shortly after his return, he again departed on a musical tour of the provinces.

Audrey, engaged with the care of her child, and the duties of her family, could not this time accompany him, and saw him depart with misgivings, which he in vain sought to overcome.

“You are so delicate still, Basil,” she said, as she besought him to stay yet a little longer with them, “so very delicate, that I fear the consequences of any great exertion. You have not half recovered from the effects of your dreadful entombment and still more frightful journey. Do not go yet, I beseech you !”

“Nay, Audrey, I must indeed ; I cannot live dependent on your father, nor can I bear to see you toil as you still do, for all of us. Besides, it is wise to take advantage of the interest which the whisper of my death has created. Mrs. Cowley tells me, I am sure of a favourable reception from the public now ; and for your sake and our boy’s, I must take advantage of my temporary popularity.”

And he went ; nor were his expectations deceived. The English public have a deep fount of pity, and kindly sympathy with suffering dormant in their hearts, which springs into vivid action when any fellow-being's misfortunes are of a sufficiently striking and public nature to attract their attention. This was the case with Basil. The man resuscitated from a buried village, had as much interest, or even more, for them, than the accomplished and popular musician had, and they crowded to hear his voice again, and overwhelmed him with kindly plaudits ; quite as much in token of their gratification that he was still living, as in testimony of their admiration for his talent. If subscriptions had been as fashionable in that day as now, Basil would probably have been enriched for life, without further exertion ; as it was, he had to respond to his popularity in song rather too frequently, and scarcely knew how to find time for the musical engagements which crowded upon him.

He toiled willingly and cheerfully however, grateful to those who shewed him such kindness, eager to please them, and, also—though *that* motive was singularly less potent than his gratitude—to win a certain independence for his family.

He was an enthusiast in his art also; not to spare himself, could he or would he have failed in doing full justice to it; there was a loyalty in his character which would have recoiled from imposing an inferior and careless performance on a public that received him with such favour, even though he were well aware that they, in many instances, were not strict judges of good music. He always did his best and his utmost.

But he grew thinner, his voice, at times, became uncertain, and he began to think of home, and Audrey, and rest. Just at this period he was earnestly requested by the manager of the oratorios and concerts of Bath

in which city he had been singing, to take part in a concert, that the professional people of the town were about to give, for the relief of the distressed and orphan family of a late musician.

Basil could not be deaf to such an appeal. He felt weary and exhausted, but he trusted that he should find strength to sing once more in such a cause.

The announcement of his name, and of the *repertoire* of favourite songs he was to give, filled the concert room to overflowing; and when he presented himself to his audience, he was received with a tumult of applause. There was always something very winning in Basil's appearance, his gentle countenance was so expressive of kindly feeling and good faith; but on that night, it wore a still more pleasing look, and won a more general meed of approbation.

The sense of doing a good action at much

personal sacrifice, and the pleasure of beholding its success in the throng before him, gave a bright, happy expression to eyes brilliant with incipient fever, and heightened the hectic crimson on his cheek. Never had he looked so handsome ; never had he sung so sweetly.

You might have heard a pin drop in the hushed chamber as the audience listened for the commencement of each bird-like gush of melody, and the momentary silence that followed the close of each song, spoke more flatteringly to the musician's pride than the rapturous applause that followed.

They encored nearly everything he sang ; a cruel kindness very often ; in this instance, almost a fatal one.

As Basil, good-naturedly and even gratefully, attempted to respond to one of these marks of approval, following a rather exhausting song of high held notes, he felt suddenly that his voice had deserted him. Alarmed and

startled, he advanced, murmured an apology, glided from the platform out of the room, and fainted as he gained the antichamber.

The alarmed professionals summoned a physician from the concert-room, and did all they could to revive him ; but his restored senses found him so weak that he could scarcely stand or speak, and the good doctor enjoining perfect silence, carried him, in his own carriage, back to his hotel. He continued very ill all night, and the next day. At his request they sent for Audrey. She, alone, could soothe his pillow, and he felt it would be an injury to her love not to summon her beside it.

Poor girl ! she delayed not a moment in hastening to him ; she rested not day or night till she was with him. And what a smile of peace and hope illumined his pale face, as she glided into the room, and took her place as nurse beside him. His illness was no longer

terrible ; that night he slept peacefully under her watching and loving eyes. Her presence brought rest to his weary heart and frame. She did her "spiriting so gently," her motions were so calm and graceful, that when she moved about his chamber she did not disturb him ; and seated, her gaze and her low whisper hushed him to repose. But he was very ill—too ill to know or notice more than vaguely, that constant and untiring vigil. Reduced to the weakness of an infant, he almost as unconsciously rested on her care and tenderness. By degrees, however, the love and patience which, as it were, wrestled with death for him, prevailed. He grew better and stronger ; and was, at length, pronounced out of danger ; but the physician as he pronounced this blessed intelligence, told the grateful and weeping Audrey that her husband must sing no more.

"His lungs are very delicate," he said, "the slightest exertion of voice now might be fatal ;

may I doubt if he will ever have power to sing again, even if he desired it. These delicate tenor voices so soon perish."

"Ah! he will grieve at the loss, I fear, sadly," said the young wife, "he so loves his art; but he is good, meek, patient; I trust he will learn to say, 'God's will be done.' For my own part, I am too thankful for his life, to be able to spare a regret for his voice, dearly as I loved it."

"You are an admirable wife as well as an unequalled nurse;" replied the doctor, "you have done almost as much to restore your husband by care and watchfulness as I have by skill. But where do you live, Mrs. Findelkind—far north I think I heard you say?"

"Not very far from York."

The physician shook his head.

"You must not carry Herr Findelkind back thither," he said, "Alpine born though he be, he can no longer brave the north. You must

find some snug, sweet country village for him, in the south. Do you know of such a spot?"

"Oh yes!" said Audrey, eagerly, "my own old home, Charliewood. It is warm, and snug and sheltered; he shall go there."

And she wrote to her father and to John Page, and told them that very day of the doctor's comforting tidings, and of his decision as to Basil's future locality. The very thought of Charliewood brought a vision of domestic comfort and old childlike fancies before her mind.

And day by day he grew better; still lovingly tended, carefully watched, and amused with cheerful gossip or more serious discourse by his indefatigable little wife. By degrees, very gently and gradually, she told him of the necessity that existed for changing their abode and for his abstaining, for at least a twelve-month, from singing—she could not bear to pain him by informing him at once that the

doctor believed his beautiful voice never would return. Basil submitted meekly to the decision ; all places were the same to him if Audrey were with him, he said, and there was no occasion for him to sing again just yet ; he had been more successful than he hoped. His earnings would suffice to keep them humbly for some time, and when his strength returned he would provide more ample means for his dear wife.

She smiled and talked hopefully of the future, cheerfully of the present.

Tom Dabney though grieved at his son-in-law's illness, was not sorry that circumstances, in a manner, compelled him to return to Charliewood. His heart yearned towards his only brother, and the scenes of his happy youth, and he forgot in these natural instinctive feelings, the false shame, and the shrinking from idle curiosity which had hitherto exiled him from his native place. So he wrote to Jonathan, and besought his good offices in securing him

a comfortable cottage in Charliewood. The sexton rejoiced greatly at the receipt of this letter, contemning and braving, in the pleasure of his lost brother's return, the anger of Mrs. Dabney, who was wrath at this triumphal return of her rival Audrey, and foresaw the downfall of her own sway over her ponderous husband, when he should be upheld and supported by this strong reinforcement of natural allies and friends.

Indeed it was quite an event of importance in the little village when the whole party from Yorkshire arrived, which they did just before Christmas (Basil could not travel earlier) and took possession of their new cottage which gossip Ford had helped Jonathan to get ready for them ; being fully repaid for her trouble, she said—kind heart—by seeing the long separated brethren meet. So deep an impression indeed did this re-union make on her mind, that she journeyed from house to house all through

the village, for a week, to tell every-body how Jonathan held out his hand and said, "welcome back, Tom," and how Tom took it and tried to speak but could not, and sobbed like a baby, and how the sexton took out his yellow handkerchief and wiped his own eyes, and said, "Poor Kate! which name made not only Tom but "Audrey that was," (Mrs. Ford seemed to fancy Audrey had resigned her christian name to Basil) "cry like anything," and hug her old uncle till he fairly sobbed also. Nothing could exceed the joy of Charlie-wood, at the return of its prodigal son.

No end of old friends came to re-claim Tom's acquaintance, and be introduced to Basil.

John Page came in for his full share of welcome from the villagers. He had written a printed book, and was now looked on as an honour to the village, and a very remarkable and admirable personage. Our poor cripple, good and philosophical as he was, greatly en-

joyed his fame, and was by no means unwilling to receive homage where he had formerly met with only a pity, that at times wounded him.

Basil enjoyed the country air, and the repose, and although a close prisoner, as yet, to the house, was well enough to hope for a merry Christmas in the bosom of his English home.

CHAPTER XIII.

VAUX was married. He had chosen a wife wholly on selfish principles ; the recompense of his judgment is to be seen.. For a time Louise played her part of assumed *naïvetè* and devoted love to admiration, but there are few people capable of continuing at all hours the *role* of an actor, much less could such be expected from a woman as self-indulgent and indolent as Mrs. Vaux naturally was. By degrees her actual self peeped through the fair

mask, and as there was no love on her husband's side to blind him to her defects ; and by its subtle alchemy transmute the base lead to gold, his disgust and astonishment were unbounded. With all his foolish idolatry of self, Vaux was a thorough English gentleman—save and except the meanness of self-love, he was wholly free from narrow and vulgar sentiments.

His moral taste was of the highest possible standard, and it was shocked at once by coming in contract with the false, low, poor notions of right and wrong, which conversation and intimacy developed in his wife. He began to wonder at the ease with which she had imposed on both himself and the M'Coys ; he forgot the potent spell of clever flattery and echoed opinions, by which she had cast such a glamour over the good, simple minded people who protected her, and over his far less discerning self.

But there was no help for it now; it remained for him to try if he could raise her mind to a higher tone of thought, and with every kind and honourable intention he made the effort. Alas! Louise's heart was thoroughly vitiated by self-indulgence, early neglect and a poisonous course of reading; a far higher power than any Vaux dreamed of, was needed to purify that corrupted fountain. The only effect of his lectures and teachings was to destroy such little liking as she really entertained for him, and to make her look on him as a personification of *ennui*. She listened to him wearily—yawned furtively—and solaced herself by indulging in *gourmandise*, dressing, and devouring her favourite volumes by stealth.

The light had passed for ever from Vaux's life—he despised alike his wife and himself. The image of Helen rose ever beside her, to

haunt him with the memory of the noble creature he had lost by his own folly and weakness; and his health which had never wholly recovered from the injury inflicted by his wound, and the consequent amputation of his arm, yielded to this mental irritation.

He became very ill; a low nervous fever oppressed him, and at length confined him to his chamber. It was a very different sick room from that in which love watched beside the pillow of the poor musician.

Here were all the most costly means and appliances to soothe and relieve the sick man; luxury, elegance, numerous attendants; there the simple chamber of an inn, the sole attendant, the loving and faithful wife. But *she* was wanting in the splendid apartment where Vaux passed the restless hours of illness and sleepless irritation. Mrs. Vaux had a great fear of infection, especially of low typhus, and

Vaux generously tried to think that it was only right and proper, and prudent that she should eschew a spot full of danger for her—but the strong conviction that had Helen been his wife, she would have boldly and fearlessly encountered the peril, and have cheered and soothed those weary hours, would in spite of his efforts force itself on his mind.

Even as the murderer is said to be haunted by the ghost of his victim, was Vaux's pillow haunted by the spirit of that love which he had sacrificed on the altar of his pride. In the hours of night—so terrible when deserted by their attendant sleep—Helen's voice rang in his ear; her look rose constantly before his mental vision. One night especially, as he lay awake with closed eyes and throbbing temples, a song she had once read aloud, at Sir Philip's bidding, from Peele's 'Arraignment of Paris,' troubled him like a real mocking sound. The words

that would thus incessantly return were these :—

“ My merry, merry, merry roundelay
Concludes with Cupid’s curse—
‘They that do change old love for new
Pray God they change for worse.”

The significant meaning of the lay, and its strange return on his memory troubled him greatly, and he was glad at last, when the two female servants who sat up with him, began to talk in a tone which was audible. He listened to their words in hopes of thus losing the lines that haunted him, but the impression lingered on his brain, disturbed as it was by fever, and mingled wildly with the nurses’ gossip, which ran thus :—

“ She don’t care anything for her husband,” said the eldest, “ there ain’t an old servant in

the house that don't show more feeling. There she sits all day, close to the fire, a reading her outlandish books, and writing outlandish letters, and she is more careful in ordering her own nice dinner than in seeing that he is well attended to, or asking how he is. I have no patience with her."

"No more have I, Susan, I don't think she loves anybody but herself, for all she's so smooth spoken. And ain't it odd she always will post those outlandish letters herself? She drives to the post office, and then gets out and puts them in instead of giving them to James, who is quite curious about it. He told me yesterday, that she was writing for hours, and when he went in to make up the fire she happened to be out of the room, and the letter a lying on her desk, so he couldn't for the world help just taking a peep at it."

"That wasn't right," said the elder, shaking her head; "but what was it all about?"

“He couldn’t make out for the life of him, for he don’t know French.”

“Ah!” said the listener “then she’ll drive to post after luncheon to-morrow.”

“They that do change old love for new,
Pray God they change for worse,”

rang on the feverish brain of Vaux.

“And can’t you tell at all who it is she’s always a-writing to?”

“Well, yes! James *has* got a peep at *one* direction, and that was to a Munseer de Bris-sac.”

The invalid started, and uttered a faint moan.”

“Hush! master’s awake.”

And the woman approached the bed, and gave Vaux a cooling drink.

He moistened his parched lips with it, and sank back on his pillow with a sigh—the nurse resumed her seat, and was silent.

De Brissac! the name, fraught with so much misery to him, mingled with the burden of the old song again; and he wondered whether he had actually heard aright, or if the whole was a delusion incident to fever.

Morning broke at last; he had thought it would never come, so long, so troubled had been the hours of darkness.

The women withdrew to rest, and his old, tried, faithful servant Thomas entered.

Vaux gazed wistfully upon this man as he answered the poor fellow's anxious enquiry as to how he had slept. Here was one, on whose silence he could rely, but the feelings of the gentleman struggled with his jealous curiosity and distrust. Should he betray his wife to the suspicion of a menial?"

Thomas remarked his master's anxiety, and asked—

“If he wished for anything?”

“Yes,” said Vaux, after a moment's hesitation, “I wish to know if a certain letter on on business has been sent to France; but Mrs. Vaux is so afraid of infection—” he hesitated. “Can you bring me her desk for a few minutes without her knowledge?”

“Surely, sir,” replied the trusty Thomas; “but how will you open it? It will be locked, you know! Shall I ask her for the key?”

“No, no! bring it here; I have a curious little picklock with which I opened my own dressing case at Venice—don't you recollect.”

Thomas did recollect; he left the room, and in a few seconds returned with his lady's desk, which he had abstracted from her dressing-room.

Vaux bade him open it, (as he had once before used the instrument) and then feebly raising himself looked within. There *was* a foreign letter—he saw at a glance by the paper—he raised it, and looked at the address. It was directed even as he had heard the woman say to De Brissac. Trembling with amazement and agitation, he gazed on the envelope. What could have led to a correspondence between Louise and this reprobate Frenchman? His first impulse was to summon his wife, and command her to open and read the epistle to him; but he remembered that she would not come; that she shunned his room as she would a plague-stricken spot; therefore, though it pained and distressed him to be compelled thus to steal into her confidence, he came to the conclusion that the tie existing between them justified him in examining its contents himself.

Desiring Thomas to withdraw and return in

a few minutes, he opened the letter, and with emotions past all description, read as follows, in French—

“ You ought to be satisfied, my dearest friend, with my assurance, that had I not believed myself deserted by you, I would not, for all Vaux’s wealth, have broken my early troth to yourself. You still possess my affection, though *nothing* shall ever induce me to see you again, (as you desire,) unless it pleases Fortune to set me once more free. Urge me no more on the subject. There *is* some hope of his death, for he is seriously ill; devoured by a burning fever and his constitutional *ennui*. Oh! he is the most weary egotist that ever existed! but hush! I mean that entirely as an ‘aside’ which you are not to hear.

“ I am glad you can give so good an ex-

planation of the affair in which you were concerned with Miss B——. I had feared that *you* had been the first to break our plighted troth; I am glad you were but acting for another in that matter; though how our crafty cousin René ever came to imagine so bold a scheme to enrich himself I cannot understand. I much more easily comprehend his present vindictive feelings towards the heiress, *they* are much more in accordance with his character and professions.

“Does not Monsieur l’Avocat, however, a little forget his usual craftiness when he seeks the gratification of his revenge in so romantic a style? ‘A cook!’ say you? A word in his ear, De Brissac, which you may whisper for me if you will; England is *not* a country to be vindictive in with impunity; and if he shows his amiable temper in anything *worse* than spoiling the B——’s dinner, he will have cause to repent it.

“This is the last letter you will have from me, unless my friendly stars render me shortly that happy personage—a rich young widow, (*then* perhaps—but of that hereafter). My husband plays the *rôle* of the jealous lover; nay, perfectly honourable as our engagement was, and sanctioned as it was by my mother, I never dare own to him that I had a lover before *he* deigned to notice me.

“Adieu *mon ami*—warn our cousin *not* to act a melo-drama in England—and believe me, &c., &c.

“LOUISE.”

Vaux's eyeballs literally burned with indignation, as he read this precious epistle.

For some minutes after its perusal, he sat up in bed, paralysed with horror and amazement; the

first action of his mind, when he recovered from this trance of agony, was to recollect the dark hint it contained of some strange danger awaiting Helen Beaumont. He re-read the paragraph relating to her, and then rang the bell violently.

"Thomas !" he exclaimed, as his startled attendant entered, "order the carriage, and return and dress me instantly."

"Sir !" exclaimed the alarmed valet.

"I am in earnest ; let them put on four horses ; I must start on a journey to-day."

"Impossible, sir ! You are only just past the crisis of the fever. You are too weak to move. The doctor never would permit it. And, indeed, I don't think you could stand, sir," added the faithful Thomas, his eyes filling with tears.

He was fully convinced that his master's brain wandered.

"Perhaps I cannot stand," replied Vaux,

more calmly, "If so, you shall carry me in your honest arms ; but, Thomas, duty and honor call me hence. *You*, I am certain, would not hinder me from obeying their voice.

"What, another duel ?" exclaimed the valet, opening his eyes very wide, "sure, and it's impossible."

"No ; no duel, Thomas ; but business of life or death, that admits of no delay ; quick, obey me this once, good fellow. It may be for the last time."

Vaux looked so wan and exhausted as he uttered these words, that Thomas believed they were only too certain of fulfilment, and turned to obey with a heavy heart.

The task of dressing the invalid proved a difficult one—Vaux fainted once during its performance, but still persisted in it ; and when it was completed, wrote a short note on Louise's desk, with a trembling hand, com-

manding Thomas to have it instantly posted. The physician, in attendance, arrived just as this act had been completed, and was amazed and angry at his patient's mad proceedings; but Vaux had a few minutes' private conference with him, which appeared partly to remove his objections, for Thomas, who listened with feverish anxiety, heard him say as they issued from the dressing-room :

“ Well, Mr. Vaux, since the case *is* so imperative, and you are resolved, I will do the best I can for your safety. I will travel thither with you.”

A few minutes afterwards the carriage and four drove off. Louise, who was by that time stirring, heard the sound, and sent her woman to enquire what it meant. The maid returned with a countenance expressive of both fear and wonder.

“ It is Mr. Vaux, ma'am, gone.”

“ Mr. Vaux !—nonsense—he can't sit up.”

“Indeed, ma’am, he *is* gone, and the doctor with him, and nobody can tell where.”

“Surely Doctor Simms cannot be carrying him to a mad-house without my permission?” thought Louise; she said aloud—“very extraordinary! make haste and dress me, that I may go and see what it means.”

The maid very readily obeyed; her own curiosity being vividly excited; but Louise, when dressed, failed to elicit any solution of the mystery, and would have been puzzled, beyond expression, had she not, at length, missed her desk, which Vaux had locked up in his own bureau. Then her conscience took alarm, and a terrible fear oppressed her.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR PHILIP BEAUMONT was seated at breakfast alone. Helen had been ailing for some days, and kept her room, and he was anxious and uneasy about her, though her illness did not appear to be of an alarming nature.

The post-bag was brought in. He opened it, and turned over its contents carefully, till his eye fell on a letter directed in singular tremulous characters ; then he uttered an exclamation of surprise, for the hand-writing was

that of Vaux. Its contents proved more surprising than the fact of Vaux writing to him at all, and after perusing them in silence, he re-read them aloud :

“DEAR SIR PHILIP,”

“Beware of your new French cook. Don’t let Miss Beaumont eat anything he prepares ; but also don’t let him see that you suspect him. Keep him safe till I arrive, which will be in a day, I hope.

“Yours,

“VAUX.”

Sir Philip was greatly startled. He *had* a new French cook—one highly recommended—

and it was certain—now he thought of it—that Helen had been slightly indisposed of late; but how could Vaux know either the one fact or the other? He was startled, and very much alarmed. He did not like to communicate the contents of this note to Helen, for fear of frightening her. He scarcely knew what to do.

As he sat in anxious thought, he recollected Audrey, and ringing the bell, ordered his horse, and desired the servant to send off immediately for the family surgeon, to come and see Miss Beaumont.

In a very disturbed state of mind Sir Philip then rode over to Charliewood. He would, at once, have removed Helen to another house, had she been well enough; but, as it was, he could not do so without alarming and inconveniencing her, moreover, he wished to wait Vaux's explanation of his strange note, ere he made any stir in the matter.

“The doctor,” he thought, “will soon tell what is the matter with her, and will, at my request, order change of air. For the next day or two, however, this young countrywoman must be my assistant.”

Audrey was rather alarmed when Mary announced Sir Philip Beaumont, for her quick wit, at once, jumped at the conclusion that Miss Beaumont must be ill, and had sent to her, and as she made her little obeisance at his entrance, she asked timidly and anxiously,

“If Miss Beaumont were well.”

“Not as well as I could wish, my good Mrs Findelkind,” said Sir Philip, “and I am come to know if you can find time and inclination to nurse her for a few days. You will greatly oblige me if you can.”

“I shall be very happy to do anything for her, Sir Philip, and Basil owes so much to you and Miss Beaumont, that I know he will spare me with pleasure.”

“Thank you, Audrey. But how is Basil ? does he still require your care himself ?”

“Oh, no, I am glad to say, sir ; he is getting quite strong.”

“And his voice ?”

She shook her head sorrowfully.

“Well, never mind ; he shall not need to try it again. But can you come at once ? Is there a fly or cart in the village that would bring you over, or shall I send for you ?”

There was a fly at the Crown, and Audrey promised faithfully to be with Miss Beaumont before evening. It was rather a long drive, and she had a few household arrangements to make, that might detain her till then ; Sir Philip assented, but lingered yet a moment.

“So thrifty a little housewife,” he said, “can doubtless cook the trifles that an invalid requires ?”

Audrey professed her ability to do so.

“And you may bring a few cottage loaves

with you," he added, "Helen will perhaps fancy them more than bread made at the manor."

On his return to Crowhurst, Sir Philip found the apothecary there; he had seen Miss Beaumont and declared her slightly indisposed, feverish and nervous; but gave no hint of her having taken any deleterious food. When the baronet suggested it he smiled at the notion.

"Who would harm so sweet a young lady?" he said, "Oh, no! her indisposition proceeds from natural causes; the winter is too warm and moist for health. Low fever is very prevalent."

Sir Philip, though somewhat relieved, was still glad when he saw Audrey installed in his daughter's chamber. Helen was pleased to see her favorite; yet she smiled at her father's fond solicitude.

"See how this dear papa of mine spoils me," she said, to Audrey, "a head-ache conjures

you to my bed-side, because he knows he could bring me nothing I like better."

Audrey felt the kind courtesy of this speech, and thanked Miss Beaumont for it with her pleased and eloquent look of thanks.

That evening, and all the next day she prepared Helen's food with her own hands, and either her neat cookery or the doctor's draughts proved very effective ; in the evening Miss Beaumont descended to the drawing-room to sit with her father for an hour or two before retiring to rest.

She had scarcely taken her seat in the easy chair, which he had drawn beside the fire for her, ere a carriage was heard driving up to the hall-door, and the bell announced the arrival of visitors.

"Who can that be so late?" exclaimed Helen.

"A friend whom I had almost forgotten, though I expected to see him on business—you

had better go to your room again, love, for a little while."

"How! something mysterious going on that I may not know? Well, I won't play Fatima, and be over-curious. Good night, then, dear papa.

He kissed her, lighted her candle for her, wrapped her in her shawl, and she withdrew. As she passed along the great gallery which ran round the hall, she perceived two persons ascending the staircase very slowly, the one leaning heavily on his companion's arm, the other carefully giving him attentive support. This latter was quite unknown to her, but as the feeble visitor raised his drooping head for a moment, and the light the servant carried fell full on it, she recognised the features of Vaux, so pale and wan and deathlike, that she could scarcely believe it to be him. His look recalled the one with which he had stood before her in Paris, on the night of the duel with De

Brissac, and she trembled so violently that she could scarcely proceed to her chamber. She did not know whether he had seen her or not.

CHAPTER XV.

SIR PHILIP BEAUMONT started with surprise and no little consternation, when, as the servant announced, "Mr. Vaux," he beheld the feeble ghastly apparition of his gallant young friend creep into the drawing-room, leaning on the doctor's arm. He advanced to meet him with a look of the kindest interest and pity, exclaiming—

"Good Heaven, Vaux ! what has happened to you ?"

He extended his hand ; his guest pressed it eagerly, and tried to speak, but deep emotion rendered his words inaudible.

“ Mr. Vaux has risen from a bed of sickness to come to you Sir Philip,” explained the doctor, “ and is much exhausted by a long and rapid journey. With your leave we will place him on the sofa, and give him some slight refreshment before he explains the purpose of his visit.”

Sir Philip complied instantly with the suggestion ; supported Vaux to the couch, and rang for a servant.

“ What will you have brought for your patient, doctor ?” he asked.

“ A little tea ; the fever from which he was slowly recovering still hangs about him ; we must not venture on a more exciting beverage.”

Sir Philip ordered it.

Poor Vaux, meanwhile reclined on the

cushions with closed eyes, and a cheek pale as death. The Baronet was lost in wonder, but he asked no questions, and waited till his extraordinary visitor should find power or inclination to explain his appearance. At length Vaux, in a low, faint voice inquired for Miss Beaumont.

“She has been slightly indisposed, but is much better,” replied Sir Philip, “perhaps I have to thank your singular hint for her amendment.”

“Thank Heaven she is safe!” murmured the invalid.

The servant now entered with the tea, and interrupted any further conversation. After partaking of it, and reposing quietly for about half an hour Vaux rallied a little.

“You must be amazed at seeing me here at all, Sir Philip,” he said, slowly, “and still more amazed at my appearing before you thus weak and ill; but my honour is dearer to me

than my life, and I could entrust to no other person the business that brings me hither. In your known honour, and that of my dear friend and physician, Doctor Simms, I know I can confide. You will both promise me that all that now reaches your knowledge shall be kept for ever secret."

Sir Philip bowed assent.

"You know that I am married," continued Vaux, "and doubtless despise me as much as I do myself, for my wavering will. But my weak selfishness is fearfully punished; I married to gratify a selfish, fastidious pride, and a prejudice, to which I sacrificed—but it is useless, and worse than useless to talk of it; I would bury my own grief in my heart, if I alone suffered from it, but Helen's safety appears compromised, and therefore I *must* betray in a measure my domestic misery. Read this letter."

He placed Louise's letter in Sir Philip's hand.

The Baronet perused it with emotions of wonder, pity, and indignation."

"*M. l'Avocat*," he said, "playing the part of 'cook' too. It must mean the villanous lawyer who assisted de Brissac in his scheme about Helen! And we *have* a new cook—one that would quite answer the description she gave of him, now I think of it. This is frightful."

"Has Miss Beaumont never seen your cook, that she did not recognise him?" asked Doctor Simms.

"No; she *could* only see him at prayers, and those he never attends, as he is a Romanist; probably, also, he is in part disguised; but he could rely on her never seeing him. You would like to speak to him, Vaux, of course?"

"Yes, and as privately as it is possible to manage the affair," said the young man.

"I will send for him; a consultation about some light supper for yourself will answer

the purpose of allaying the servants' curiosity."

He rang the bell.

"Send Bertin up, John. I want to consult him on some proper nourishment for Mr. Vaux, who is very ill."

In a very few minutes, a thin, stooping figure presented itself in obedience to this mandate, and Doctor Simms, as he watched the creeping motion with which the creature entered the room, his weasel-shaped face, narrow, fox-like forehead, and the small but glittering eyes that gleamed from beneath a pair of shaggy brows, secretly determined that he had never looked upon a more perfect personification of low cunning and intense malice. Vaux almost groaned; this wretch wearing (probably as a disguise) the dress peculiar to the craft he had assumed, was the near kinsman of her who bore the name of his wife!

Bertin closed the door, and waited, in ob-

sequious silence, his master's orders. Sir Philip addressed him sternly—

“You are detected, *Monsieur l'Avocat*,” he said, in Bertin's own language, “both in your disguise, and its fell purpose. Your kinswoman, Mademoiselle Delville, or rather Mrs Vaux, has betrayed you.”

Bertin made a step towards the door; but Doctor Simms, a powerful and athletic man, had already interposed his person in that direction, and made escape impossible.

The villain's countenance fell, though he assumed a boldness he felt not.

“I do not comprehend, Monsieur le Chevalier,” he said, “nor have I the honor of possessing a relative who calls herself Vaux. There is one mistake here.”

“Not one mistake at all,” said the doctor, “but two policemen below, who, after they have examined your boxes, and your little flavourings for made dishes, will have the pleasure of escorting you to prison.”

The fellow muttered a French oath.

“Nay, it is of no use to swear. Your only chance of escape is in telling the whole truth—which, if you do, we may be induced to show you some mercy.”

“I have done nothing to merit punishment,” exclaimed Bertin, savagely, “your laws can take no hold of me.”

“You are mistaken; they are severe on impostors—deadly for attempted poisoners.”

The cat-like eyes assumed an expression of terror.

“What would Monsieur have me confess,” he said, sullenly. “I know not what is demanded of me.”

“You are to answer my questions truly,” said Sir Philip, (who saw that Vaux was quite unequal to the task before them.) “And first, are you not the lawyer employed by M. le Vicomte de Brissac, in his attempt to obtain my daughter’s fortune?”

“ I was once employed by Monsieur de Brissac as a lawyer, for the purpose of drawing up a contract of marriage. It was my business—I could not refuse.”

“ Why are you in your present position in my family ?”

“ I had no other means of support. My sole crime is a want of success in my profession, and consequent poverty.”

Sir Philip struggled with his impatience.

“ We may, perhaps, give more credence to your statement if you relate all you know of your relatives, M. de Brissac and Mademoiselle Delville. They *are* your cousins, *we know*. Tell us something of their former history,” said Doctor Simms, who had, meantime, whispered to Vaux for a few seconds, and received instructions from him. “ They were betrothed, were they not ?”

“ *Eh bien !* I do not see why I should not satisfy your curiosity on *their* account. They

were betrothed. I had even prepared the contract for their espousals ; but Madame Delville died, poorer than she was thought, just before the signing of the deed, and de Brissac went to Paris. There he fell in love with Mademoiselle Beaumont, or her thousands, or both, and caused me to re-write the contract for her and himself."

" Did he actually believe he could force my daughter into such a marriage ?" exclaimed Sir Philip.

" I don't know. He is a handsome youth, and believes himself irresistible. He thought the fair Helen smiled on him, but was certain the papa would be inexorable to the suit of a penniless Frenchman, though noble. He devised a scheme, therefore, for obtaining a private interview with the lady. I was to await its close, (with my contract and witnesses in readiness) in the next room. The demoiselle was of age, and had possession of her fortune.

He pretended to play the part of a despairing lover, and doubted not he should cajole her ; but, by a mistake—de Brissac was always *étourdi*—he brought her into *my* apartment first, and, quick as lightning, she guessed the whole truth—would not listen to a word he uttered ; but burst from him, and ran screaming out of the room ; when an Englishman, who, by some unlucky chance, happened to be in the house, hearing her, rushed to the rescue, and by knocking down de Brissac, put him completely out of his part.”

“ The villain ! ” exclaimed the Baronet.

“ *Bête* rather, Sir Philip,” with a shrug, “ de Brissac *is* handsome ; but he wants sense.”

“ And Mademoiselle Delville,” asked Vaux, feebly, “ was she aware of this vile scheme ? ”

“ Little Louise ? Oh, no ! she would have gone wild, and marred all by her jealousy—for,

from her childhood, she doted on de Brissac. When she *did* hear of it afterwards, she wrote to de Brissac in such a fury, he told me."

"De Brissac is now in England, is he not?"

"Yes, he came thither with me, as soon as his period of imprisonment expired."

"Have you seen him lately, or heard anything of Mademoiselle Delville?"

"No—I never heard of her after we went to Paris, and she had become teacher in a ladies' school. And I have not seen De Brissac since I came to Crowhurst."

"When did he receive the letter from my—from Mademoiselle Delville then?"

"Just before he was out of prison. He did not say where she was then."

There was a pause.

"Has Monsieur any more questions to ask?"

"One only; but to it I scarcely expect an

answer," said Sir Philip, in his turn. "Had you any evil design on Miss Beaumont, when you entered my house?"

"No, Sir Philip, on my honour; my revenge (if I had any) was to have fallen on the fellow who shot me, and who—when I personated my cousin's valet—got me imprisoned and branded as a thief—that villain of a sailor—but when I came he was gone."

"Poor Jack! it is well he resisted our entreaties to remain with us, and went to sea. But did you venture here with the possibility of his recognising you?"

"I think I have wit enough to deceive a quicker pair of eyes than that dull fool possesses."

"Your wit has not saved you from detection, you see," said Sir Philip, sternly, "nor shall your effrontery preserve you from punishment, if you do not leave England with your best possible speed."

“Set your mind at ease on that account, Sir Philip,” exclaimed Doctor Simms, “our friends below stairs have instructions to see Monsieur safe across the water, and if he returns hereafter, they will scarcely fail of a quick recognition of him.”

With unabashed impudence Bertin, bowed an acknowledgement of this speech, as if a personal favour had been conferred on him.

“Assure yourself, *Monsieur le Docteur*,” he replied, “that having found your England so inhospitable, I shall not visit her shores again. Am I to consider myself dismissed?”

“Stay,” cried Vaux, with an effort. “Tell us yet once—do you know aught to the disparagement of Mademoiselle Delville?”

“Nothing, on my honour, Monsieur, save that she is poor, and not too pretty. But, (if I may ask a question in my turn,) do I owe

the betrayal of my unfortunate decline in circumstances to Mademoiselle Louise?"

"Not intentionally; she betrayed you accidentally."

"Ah! but she could only have heard my secret from De Brissac. This it is to take a weak-headed fop into one's confidence."

Wearied and disgusted with the impertinent *persiflage* of the fellow's manner, Sir Philip now requested Doctor Simms to rid them of him, as he had proposed, and the doctor accordingly escorted Bertin into the corridor, where two policemen awaited his exit, placed there by Simms on his arrival.

When the physician returned to the drawing-room, he found Sir Philip endeavouring to revive Vaux, who had fainted. The good doctor shook his head.

"He is very, very ill," he said, feeling his pulse. "We had better get him to bed as soon as he revives. This is a sad intrusion on you,

Sir Philip. You had better, by-the-by, keep Miss Beaumont out of the possibility of infection, though I do not fear it now."

"Nor do I—nor would Helen, I am certain. Let us not give a thought now to anything but this poor fellow's case and comfort."

Vaux was conveyed to bed ; and the physician, who had known and loved him from his birth, watched beside him all night.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Doctor Simms joined Sir Philip at breakfast the next day, he looked very grave and anxious.

“ I fear you have an unfavourable report to give of your patient, doctor,” said the Baronet, as he returned his guest’s morning salutation.

“ A *very* bad one, Sir Philip ; I greatly fear the result of this mad expedition. Mr. Vaux

is much worse ; and, with your permission, I should wish to send for further advice. I have, myself, little hope of his recovery."

" Good Heaven, can it be possible ?"

" It is a sad thing—a very distressing circumstance for you, also, Sir Philip, but I cannot think he will ever leave this house alive."

There was a sad pause ; Sir Philip was greatly affected, for he had, in spite of his faults, loved Vaux.

" I never would have consented to his leaving his home," continued Doctor Simms, " if I had not seen that opposition to his project might be as fatal, as complying with it. His mind was so torn by suspicion, and jealousy, and agony of many kinds, that he would have suffered the tortures of martyrdom had he been forcibly detained, and his fever would have returned with fatal violence in consequence."

" That letter was enough to have stirred the

temper of a less susceptible man," observed Sir Philip.

"Truly, yes; but the lady does not appear to be as culpable as he feared, though selfish and worldly, certainly."

"It is amazing how men may be governed by their foibles," said Sir Philip; "Vaux's jealous pride has been turned to fearful account by this little fortune-hunter."

"We have only the evidence of that villainous advocate in her favour after all—save the involuntary testimony of her letter," replied the doctor.

Sir Philip shrugged his shoulders.

"Vaux has no great happiness to anticipate," he said, "if he recovers. But he reaps as he has sown. I am very sorry for him."

"We must do all we can for him," said Doctor Simms, "and one requisite is an experienced and careful nurse. I must enquire if

there be such a one to be found in the neighbourhood."

"There is one in this house," replied Sir Philip, "a young countrywoman in whom my daughter is much interested. Her husband, a *protegé* of mine, cites her as a model of tenderness and watchful care."

"A treasure for us, Sir Philip, a treasure! but will she be induced to take charge of our patient. He is suffering from still lingering typhus."

"I will ask her," said the Baronet.

He rang, and desired them to send Audrey to him. In a few minutes she obeyed the summons, and Doctor Simms, as he cast the eye of a physician over her delicate features and modest countenance, received therefrom a highly favorable impression.

"Audrey," said Sir Philip, kindly, "a friend of mine arrived here last night, who is dangerously ill with typhus fever, he requires a kind

and skilful nurse, would *you* be afraid to take that place beside him."

For a single moment Audrey hesitated. The remembrance of her aunt's death chilled her; but she had a brave, true, womanly heart, worthy of that sweet Kate's niece, and she replied, after a moment's hesitation.

"I shall be happy to do my best, sir."

"Thank you," said Sir Philip, kindly, "I will go and tell Miss Beaumont why you withdraw your attendance from herself, and Doctor Simms will give you, meanwhile, any necessary instructions as to your treatment of your patient."

"Helen," he said, as a few moment's afterwards, he entered his daughter's room; "we have a most unexpected and unhappy guest."

"I know," she replied, a little tremulously, "Vaux is here. I saw him last night, as I returned to my room. What brings him? He looks fearfully ill."

“He is very ill indeed, love. He came on business, but cannot leave us again. Doctor Simms, his physician, who accompanied him, is in great alarm about him.”

“What business could have brought him out in such a state,” she exclaimed.

“I may not tell you, Helen. It is strictly confidential; but he is ill and very unhappy, and he comes to us. We must of course, forget the past.”

“Of course,” she said.

“Your little, favorite, Audrey, has consented to nurse him; you can, I think spare her now.”

“Oh, yes, assuredly,” she exclaimed, eagerly, “I am glad she will be with him. She is so clever and so kind.”

“’Tis a brave little woman. He is suffering from very recent typhus, but no fear of infection kept her back.”

“Papa, but if she should catch it, and her poor child, and poor Basil.”

Helen looked greatly alarmed.

“Doctor Simms does not fear for her. He will take every means to shield her from it, and it was absolutely essential to our patient’s *possible* restoration, that such a watcher should be beside him.”

“God keep her then,” murmured Helen.

“She will not see you again of course, love, whilst in attendance on him.”

Helen made no reply.

Vaux did not mend, though every care and attention was lavished on him. During the first day and night of Audrey’s nursing his fever returned, ran high, and rendered him delirious. As Sir Philip had probably anticipated, when he so anxiously placed Audrey about him, Vaux raved of Helen and Louise. Now fiercely reproaching his wife; now supplicating Helen’s forgiveness. It was at times a fearful trial for the young woman, to soothe his vio-

lence and quiet the transport of his disordered and agonized mind, but her patient calmness and undaunted courage and kindness always succeeded in the end.

At length the fever was subdued, and his intellect remained unclouded, but from that moment the full extent of his weakness was apparent, and Doctor Simms and his coadjutor perceived that life faded hourly ; and like a faithful friend and christian man, the former warned him of the approaching great change.

Vaux heard his doom spoken, with less emotion than the sorrowing physician had anticipated ; in fact the prostration of his bodily strength was such as to render any manifestation of deep feeling impossible, but internally the warning fell heavily upon his heart. Life had still many charms for him, though shackled with a Louise ; and futurity, hitherto little thought of, appalled him. Two hours afterwards when Audrey stole softly to his bed-side to see if he

slept, she was pained to observe large tears resting upon his manly cheek. In her softest tones, and our peasant girl's voice was full of tenderness, she asked "if he felt worse—if she could do any thing for him."

"No, my kind nurse," was his reply, "no human being can do any thing for me now. I am dying."

She turned away, and brushed off her own tears.

"You are very good to pity me," he said, in deep, melancholy accents, "you have watched over me like a ministering spirit—I thank you and I am ashamed that you should see this voluntary weakness; but, dear nurse, it is an awful thing to die—to pass from the brightness of life (bright in spite of all its sorrows) to the dark, gloomy, cheerless grave."

"Nay, sir, not so either," replied Audrey, gently, "*you* do not pass to the grave—only

the earthly tabernacle rests there—a purer life—a brighter world is beyond it.”

Vaux turned his dim eyes on her with surprise ; he was startled by her language rather than the mere truism it uttered. *This*, a hired nurse !

“ You speak well and truly,” he said, “ sit down and talk to me. There is something consoling in speaking of that awful future, to a fellow mortal. I would strive to prepare my mind for its approach.

Audrey obeyed. She had great womanly skill in comforting and calming ; she used it all now. She did not attempt to beguile her patient with vain and fallacious hopes ; but she strove to remove the impression of despondency and regret which caused his weakness, by painting the revealed glories of the eternal life—throwing, as it were, the brightness of her imagination, and enthusiastic faith over the gloom of the grave.

The horror passed in a measure from Vaux's mind, as he listened ; but new thoughts, new fears arose. Would this Heaven of light and love be his ? It was an awful question, which, of course, he shrank from propounding to his gentle nurse ; but he asked her to send for a clergyman with all convenient speed, and the injunction was instantly obeyed.

Whilst he was listening to the spiritual counsel and instruction of the vicar of Crowhurst, Audrey, praying for him, waited in the anti-chamber. At the end of about an hour she was summoned to partake, with the dying man of the last holy supper ; it was his wish she should, and very thankfully she kneeled to obey the behest.

Vaux appeared easier—much easier—calmed, soothed, and strengthened, after the holy rite, and towards evening desired to see his lawyer. Anticipating the necessity of the attorney's presence, Doctor Simms had already had him

summoned and was, himself, with Sir Philip, witness to the testamentary dispositions of poor Vaux, who grew hourly weaker and weaker.

The Baronet, deeply affected, refused to leave his unfortunate guest any more, and remained with him during the night. He slept fitfully during its continuance ; about day-dawn he awoke, much changed.

“ Beaumont are you there ?” he asked, in a hollow voice.

Sir Philip bent forward.

“ I have one longing still at my heart,” said the patient. “ You will scarcely refuse to gratify it ?”

“ Assuredly not, dear Vaux.”

“ I would see Helen once more.”

Sir Philip rose.

“ I will bring her to you,” he said, and left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

HELEN BEAUMONT had been greatly distressed by the illness, and was profoundly affected by the approaching fate of Vaux. That night, unable longer to repress the expression of her feelings, she had sent for Audrey, (whom Sir Philip had dismissed that she might get a night's rest) and implored her to remain with her instead.

“I feel very selfish to detain you thus,” she said, “but, indeed, I cannot bear to stay alone.

I know papa is sitting up with Mr. Vaux—I know that he may possibly not live till morning—I have not nerve enough to remain here without you, or to go to bed. I will wrap you up, and place you in this easy-chair, where you can sleep, if you will, and I will watch you ; your bodily presence, and the knowledge that I can awake you, will suffice.”

Audrey willingly consented to this arrangement.

“ She could not sleep herself,” she said, “ her heart was so sad for the poor young gentleman.”

And so they watched beside the fire all night, speaking in low, subdued tones, full of sorrow. And Helen asked and Audrey told all that had passed in the sick chamber, and a sense of mortality subdued all the heiress’s pride ; the shadow of Death hovered over the lordly dwelling, and the haughty young lady, shrinking from it, took refuge in another

human heart, heedless that she, with whom this solemn communing was held, was a lowly village woman.

From that night, the good teaching of disappointment (which had been silently and gradually counteracting the bad training of Helen's youth, and the evil influence of great prosperity) aided by the simple words of love and faith, which Audrey whispered, wrought its merciful effect; and the last drop of worldliness and indifference to holy things was wrung out of her character.

Just as the cold rays of daylight struggled through the heavy curtains, a tap at the door startled them. Her father's voice called —“Helen.”

She rose at once, and obeyed its summons. He did not observe her dress, which told of her vigil, nor the presence of Audrey; but taking her hand, said, in hurried and thick accents—

“Come with me. He would see you once more before he dies.”

She made no answer ; but followed him in silence.

Their footsteps echoed mournfully in the hushed mansion as they traversed the corridors leading to the chamber of death, and in the cold daybreak, those two noble countenances (so like each other) looked pale and awed, and almost stern.

They reached the chamber—they stood beside the bed ; Vaux's eyes were closed, but at the sound of their steps, he looked up feebly.

“Helen,” he said, endeavouring to extend his hand to her, “will you once more forgive me?”

She bent slowly down, and pressed her lips upon his brow ; it was clammy with the dews of death.

“God bless you, Vaux,” she whispered.
“Dear Vaux, God bless you.”

“Helen,”—the words came thick and slow

—“Helen, we shall meet above, where pride and passion—”

“Cease,” she said, tenderly and calmly, “God grant it, dear Vaux.”

He looked up earnestly in her pale, noble face. The eyes, rivetted on her, grew dim suddenly, the hand she held became colder. She bent down over him once more, then rising, said, hoarsely,

“Father, father ! is he dead ?”

Sir Philip passed his arm round her waist to draw her from the bed-side. She fainted in his arms, and he carried her back to her own room, and gave her to the care of Audrey.

Vaux was buried, at his own request, at Crowhurst—in death he wished to be near Helen ; and Sir Philip raised a stately monument to his memory. On his will being read, it was found that he had left the greater portion of his property to Miss Beaumont—an annuity of £200 to his little nurse, Audrey—and a small but sufficient provision for his wife.

Sir Philip, who, though a witness to his signing the will, had been quite ignorant of its contents, was, at first, distressed at the munificent bequest to his daughter, and the small share of wealth which it devised to Mrs. Vaux. But Doctor Simms, who always ascribed his friend's death to Louise's fatal letter, urged him so strongly not to oppose or in any way thwart Vaux's dying wishes, that he was fain to suffer Helen to keep her additional wealth. With her he could not discuss the matter, for a long and serious illness followed her last interview with her dying lover, and it was long ere his name could be uttered in her presence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM the moment that she missed her desk, Mrs. Vaux had remained in a state of suspense and fear, which was no unmeet punishment for her deceit and worldliness. She wrote to De Brissac again, telling him of the contents of her intercepted letter, and of its fate, but she received no answer.

The Vicomte had no wish to be compromised by his relative and creature's practices; and that Bertin's intentions in visiting Crowhurst

were of a more evil and deadly nature than he avowed to Sir Philip, may be surmised by the fact that, as soon as De Brissac knew Vaux was informed of the lawyer's disguise, and of his own presence in England, he returned with all convenient speed to the continent.

Thus deserted, Louise remained in an agony of anxiety, till the tidings of her husband's death reached her. At first a cruel and secret joy at her recovered freedom possessed her heart, but it was damped, and speedily, by the disappointment of her expectations with regard to her jointure, for she had hoped that Vaux died without a will. Still she was no longer poor, and philosophically making the best of circumstances, she resolved on returning to the land in which she was born, and dwelling amidst her old connexions. Here we will leave her—satisfied that neither she nor her evil-disposed kindred will again trouble the lives of those whose history we record, and

holding such characters alike beneath our interest or our curiosity.

It was a long time before our Audrey could leave Crowhurst, and return to her beloved home—not until Miss Beaumont was quite restored to health would she consent to abandon her office of nurse; contenting herself with an occasional visit from Basil and her father, who sometimes brought her boy, to cheer her in her kindly exile, with his infant smiles.

But the day came at last when she could leave the manor and return to dwell amongst her own.

It was a grand day of rejoicing for the Charliewood family. A large and pretty cottage had been taken for them; and Mary, and Basil had spent hours in adorning the home that was to receive her to whom they all owed a debt of love. And when amid the glow and beauty of the rife summer, Audrey stood amidst them, a little pale—a little worn by

watching and care, but sweet looking as ever —there was no end to their exclamations of delight.

She was charmed with the prettiness and rural elegance of her new abode, and thanked Basil for its beauty tenderly and warmly.

“Dearest,” he said, smiling, “it is rather *I* who should thank *you*. To your gentle womanly virtues we owe our future peaceful and easy existence ; for, Audrey, I know now that I may never again sing in public ; that upon other and uncertain toil we must have depended for our daily bread, had you not nobly and without the most distant hope of reward, dared infection to soothe the dying pillow of a stranger. To your good deeds, sweet one, we owe every thing.”

“Rather,” she said, “we are indebted to the munificent gratitude of that poor gentleman. 4

“Nay, Audrey ; who saved Mary from the snow-drift ? Drew our father homewards by

the report of her household virtues—saved the cripple and the imbecile woman from the poor-house—loved and toiled for and tended upon all—who but my Audrey?”

“Well, if you *will* flatter thus, I shall run away to Johnnie, and talk to him.

And she glided to the couch of her old friend, and sat chatting by him, whilst Mary busied herself in preparing a mighty feast of hot cakes and tea, to which Jonathan and his wife had been invited.

“And how is Miss Beaumont?” asked John, who had a great liking for the heiress.

“Recovering her strength rapidly. Oh, John! I may say so to you—I think this sorrow and illness has greatly improved her. She lacked but one thing, as it is said of the rich young ruler, and that one thing is now given.”

“Then we have indeed caused to rejoice for her, Audrey.”

“And you? How have you all gone on whilst I have been away from you?”

“Very well. Granny is as happy as possible with Mary and the Baby, which she can scarcely bear to be taken out of her sight. Mr. Dabney appears equally satisfied with his old acquaintances, and the society of his brother, who is often here; Basil and I have been solitary and sad, lacking you.”

“Thanks, Johnnie. And my uncle, does he appear happier than he was when we first came?”

“Ah! there lies the jest of our existence! Can you believe it, Audrey, Mrs. Dabney is in wholesome terror of our little Mary. It is a fact, never look so unbelieving! You know Mary is vixenish and domineering with all her good qualities—that was why, at first, I did not like her. Well she dares tell Mrs. Dabney all the truth and most unsparingly, and thus keeps her in laughable awe and restraint. Her indomitable spirit overpowers

the inferior and mean shrewishness of your aunt, and in a manner tames her."

"'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she would be tamed so."

"Delightful," said Audrey, gleefully, "does not uncle Jonathan rejoice at it?"

"Indeed he does; it is quite droll to see how that pompous old man takes refuge behind wee Mary's apron; not that he thinks it is apparent or would let it be for worlds, could he prevent it. He rather assumes a patronising air with Mary, pets her and makes much of her, and talks of her as a little child; and she, in her generous scorn for Mrs Dabney, permits it, though she is jealous of her dignity with every body else; and is at once his plaything and his champion. I rejoice at seeing 'Annette,' quail beneath those fierce black eyes of hers."

"Does Mrs. Dabney endure Basil more patiently, now?"

"Oh, yes, she is getting used to him; but here comes our female Petruchio to announce

that tea is ready. Behold the plate of hot cakes she carries, all made by own her skillful hands. Mary, my dear, are the sexton and his lady in sight yet ?”

“No, John, they are not ; but they will be here by the time the tea is on the table.”

“I expect Mrs. Dabney will be disgusted at your vulgarity. It is not at all genteel to have so much hot cake, Mary.”

“She had better not be disgusted, I can tell her,” said Mary, with vivacity ; “and I don’t think she will—or, at least, she won’t *say* she is. Uncle Jonathan likes a good hearty tea, and that’s enough.”

“You are a little shrew, child. You’ll rule your husband when you have one, as much as she does.”

“No, John, I won’t—at least, not in the same way. If I *did* rule him, it should be comfortably.”

“Bravo, Mary ; I’ll tell Jack so when he next comes from sea.”

She blushed, laughed, threw a flower she wore in her dress at the speaker, and ran out of the room.

It was a very pleasant and agreeable gathering round Audrey's tea-table that night. Basil was entirely happy in his wife's restored presence. John and Mary jested merrily together. Dame Page rejoiced in their mirth, and in feeding the little boy most unmercifully. Jonathan, seated beside his younger niece was pompous, dignified, and imposing—his heavy face lighted up by a feeling of satisfaction and secret security, for Annette, though a little prim and silent, was yet amiable for her, and never ventured on eliciting an unpleasant truth from the sparkling brunette seated opposite to her.

There was more than usual meaning and truth in the words, when the little party, at last, wished each other "good night."

CHAPTER XIX.

FIVE years are gone, and once more we stand in Charliewood. There is as yet little change in it externally. The bright sun of an unusually warm April morning is shining on the grey walls of the fine old church, and sparkling on the gilt weather-vane on high. There has been a pleasant shower, and the green mounds, beneath which repose the village dead, are glittering all over with diamond-like drops.

The church door is thrown back, and the pew-opener peeps out expectingly. Suddenly the gate into the churchyard opens, and Jonathan, very solemn, very important, and very much "got up," in a complete new suit of black, appears.

He greets the woman benignly and patronisingly.

"A fine day for the wedding, Master Dabney."

"Yes, Sarah, the weather is remarkably propitious."

"They'll all be here soon, I suppose? it's nigh on the fixed hour."

"Yes," pompously said the sexton, "we shall hear their approach, for they are a carriage party."

"Dear!" said the woman, in an admiring tone.

"We are respectable enough for it certainly," continued the sexton; "but it is the

bridegroom's doing, not ours. He has hired all the carriages round the neighbourhood, and crowded them with his messmates, inside and out. They are smart-looking young men, (all highly respectable, I've no doubt,) and with their white gloves and white favours, *do* look very nice. Mrs. Dabney does not think it genteel; but *I* say it's nautical. Ah! here they are!"

Three carriages, laden even as the sexton had described, with handsome, merry-looking seamen, drove up to the church, and were with wonderful dispatch in a few seconds cleared of their load, who forming a procession, escorted a bridal party up the yew-shaded avenue.

There, Tom and Mary, (the latter a very smart and pretty bride,) Audrey and Jack, (an equally bonny bridegroom,) Basil and Mrs. Dabney! Mistress Ford, Mr. and Mrs. Alton, in fact, all our old acquaintance came to wind up thus, by the union of Tom's younger

daughter and dearest friend, the old story of human life.

Only Johnnie and Dame Page were left behind at the cottage. The aged woman had partly charge of little Basil, who, as well as his old but childish companion, was delighted at the bustle and stir around him, and *would* pull "Granny," as he called her, out into the garden, that she might admire the tall mast Tom and Jack had reared there, above which now floated the Union Jack and a garland; a seaman's outward token of a wedding.

John still lay on his wonted couch, and, full of happy and resigned thoughts, watched the golden motes dancing in a thick sunbeam that passed across his recumbent figure. Whilst plunged in an indistinct and dreamy train of thinking, he was startled by the sound of carriage wheels, and an application for admittance at the door. He wondered at the quick return of the bridal party, but turned his head towards

the door to speak his warm congratulations to the bride.

It opened, but not to admit Mary and Jack.

The stately figure of Miss Beaumont glided into the room instead, and startled him somewhat by the suddenness of her unexpected appearance.

She greeted him very graciously, and drew a chair beside him.

“So you have a marriage here to-day, Page ! Mary and my brave Squire Jack. I heard all about it last night, soon after we arrived, from Mrs. Hardy, and could not refrain from calling here for a moment or two to wish my old champion joy, and to bring him a wedding gift from Sir Philip and myself.”

“You are always kind and condescending, madam.”

He marvelled as he gazed on her, at her magnificent and matured beauty.

“I need not ask if Miss Beaumont is well ; I hope Sir Philip is.”

“Quite well, thank you, John. We are both blessed with excellent health. Indeed, (after some sorrows,) we may be said, to be most unusually happy. I have often thought of your Tatler Allegory, and am willing to allow now, in all humility, that only a higher intelligence than our own can tell what *is* a blessing and what *is* a curse.”

“But you have found an infallible means of creating blessings, madam. Even in this obscure village, the fame of your munificent charities, as well as of the noble church you have built, has reached us.”

“I should be a monster if I did not endeavour to impart to others a portion of my own happiness, John ; for I am very richly blest, not only in mere wealth, but in my beloved father. But, hark ! there chime the village bells ! they will very soon be here.”

And very soon they did arrive ; a joyous, merry, and, in a degree, rollicking party. They were all pleased and flattered by the unexpected appearance of the heiress ; indeed Jack's delight was unbounded, and his gratitude, when the useful and pretty gifts she destined for him and for his wife were bestowed, was speechless.

She had a gracious word, a kind smile for every one of the party ; but she did not tarry long, she felt her presence was a restraint, and went as kindly as she had come.

" Dear lady !" said John to Audrey, in a half whisper, " what a blessing she is to every body. She seems very happy, Audrey, in spite of that poor gentleman's death."

" Yes, and her happiness is founded on a rock, Johnnie. She has the true charm of which such fables are told. She knows the secret of turning tears into diamonds."

And now the bridal party gathered round

the board, and such eating, drinking, laughing jesting, went round that Mrs. Dabney secretly pronounced the whole party decidedly "*very vulgar*;" however, she prudently kept this opinion to herself, and was by no means too genteel to do honour to the feast herself.

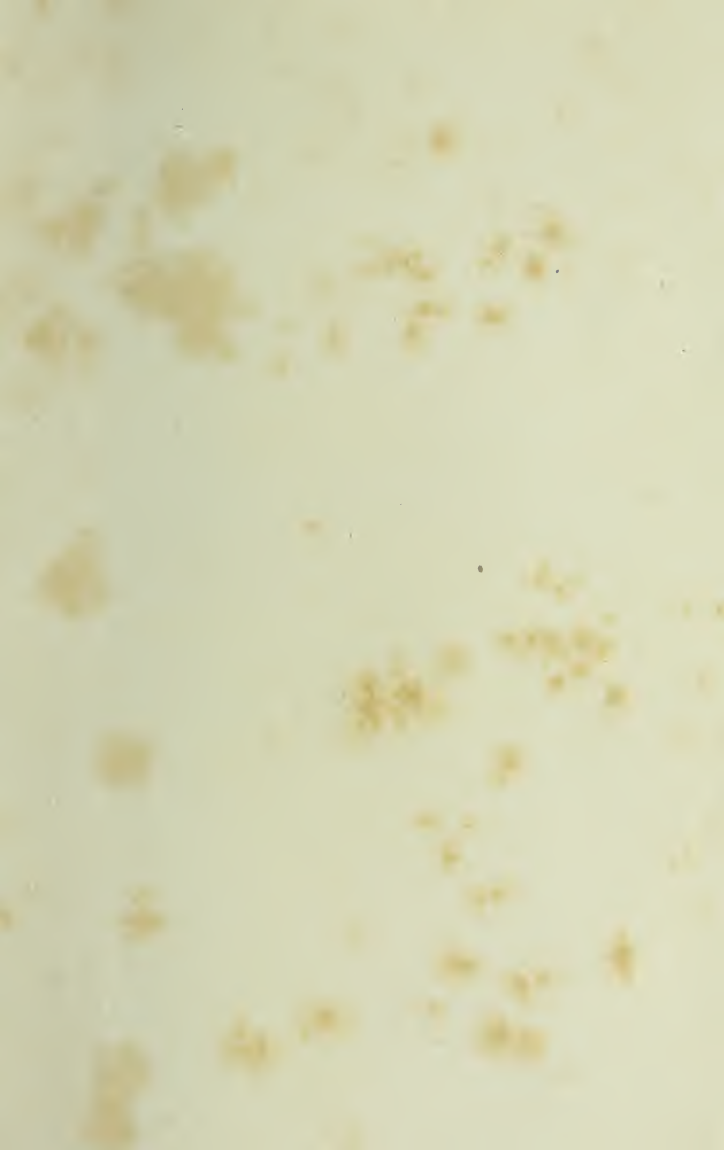
There was no end of toasts drunk; some of a most unusual and whimsical description. Jack responded to them in one final proposal that they should all drink the health of the "Sextant" of the parish, his friends, relatives, and all other nautical characters in Charliewood, and his proposition was answered by three cheers from the seamen.

The match proved happy, Jack had married a shrew, but a warm hearted and unselfish one, and the spice of hot temper now and then apparent, did not mar their happiness, but rather, perhaps, broke the monotony of what he might otherwise have called a "dead calm."

In process of time, the old rector of Charlie-wood returned thither, and when he witnessed the comfort and prosperity of the Dabney family, rejoiced (and owned his exultation to his Anna) that he had given a good, sensible and christian training to the rustic Audrey.

What more that old busy-body, Time, hath wrought for the villagers of Charliewood, "this deponent saith not."

THE END.



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